Sex, Lies, and Presidents

The Washington Monthly

OCTOBER 1998
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Charlie Peters on the Folly of Impeachment

Reviews by James Fallows, Nicholas Lemann, Timothy Noah, and Tom Ricks

The Real Danger of Viagra

elle Cottle

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General President

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Letters

The Lost World

I share Charlie Peters' outrage over Mayor Giuliani's hopes for Governors Island ("Tilting," July/Aug. 1998). During much of the period between 1965 and 1997, the Coast Guard's Third District was headquartered on the island. Before that—back to the founding of the Republic—it was an Army base.

My first taste of life on Governors Island came during my summer training there as a cadet at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. Later, I was stationed aboard a ship home-ported there. I have fond memories of that time, despite what others saw as its drawbacks. Yes, you had to ride a ferry to get between Manhattan and the island. Yes, the amenities harkened back to the 1930s. Yes, the winds blowing unobstructed up the bay during the winter were bone-chilling. But where else could you live and have the quiet, unhurried atmosphere of a rural village and still be only a 20-minute ferry ride away from all the great things New York City had to offer?

It would be a tragedy if the existing buildings were razed so expensive condos could be built. Governors Island is to a bygone U.S. military life what Greenfield Village is to 19th century rural American life or Colonial Williamsburg is to the 18th century American colonies. Its brick sidewalks, immaculate lawns, preference for pedestrians over vehicles, and echoes of "good morning, sir," accompanying a smart salute remind us of a time when life was less hurried and more courtly, even in the military.

ANDREW WEBB
San Diego, CA

Bull's Eye

Just a "Right On" for Michelle Cottle's article on university education costs and student educational abuse ("Too Well Endowed?" Sept. 1998). Here at New Mexico State University the sports budget was overspent by $2.6 million and one of the solutions was to charge students an additional activities fee (and no money can be found to bring the teaching salaries up to a national norm).

During my four years at Stanford as a student affairs administrator for Native American Programs, the bottom line for increasing the number of NA students was based on whether they or their tribe could pay the cost of enrollment. At that time the university had a $2 billion endowment and the killer calculus classes were taught by TAs or graduate students without much experience or training. After 40 years, I have come to understand that education is a cheap, hypocritical business.

GEORGE CLEVER
via e-mail

Your "Too Well Endowed?" article was right on the mark. As readers think about this issue further, they might want to add the fact that not only does undergraduate education cost more, there is less of it. There are fewer instructional days, no Saturday classes, few eight o'clocks. This, of course, is a conspiracy between the students and faculty, both of whom want less work.

ROBERT C. EMBRY JR.
PRESIDENT
THE ABELL FOUNDATION
Baltimore, MD

Michelle Cottle's September article sounds on the mark to me. I am a Cornell University graduate, and, although I feel my education was adequate, I had to go out of my way to make it so. The university was clearly more concerned with collecting fees every time I turned around than seeing that I—or anyone else—was getting a decent education. My experiences led me to dedicate myself to correcting this situation by becoming a professor, but guess what? My dedication to teaching and research in support of curriculum improvement worked against me in my attempts to find a decent academic job.

No major university will give serious consideration to a faculty applicant whose primary focus is making his discipline accessible and engaging to students. They want to know how many publications and grants you have. The grant-providing institutions are just as guilty! If they would earmark funds for improvement of teaching and curriculum, then academics with priorities similar to mine would be able to compete in the area of obtaining grant money.

I was finally able to land a job at a student-centered, nontraditional college in the SUNY system, but after three years of low pay, administrative incompetence, and an almost total lack of resources, I felt I had been exploited long enough. I have since gone into consulting, where I make significantly more money and can actually enjoy myself when I go home from work.

DAVID LIVESAY
via e-mail

No Savior

"John Kennedy saved the world from nuclear war during the Cuban missile crisis" ("Tilting," July/Aug. 1998)? You must have had blinders on during the Cuban missile crisis or are ignorant of the history of our relations with Cuba. There would have been no "missile crisis" if our government hadn't been trying in every way possible—and still is—to overthrow Cuba through attempts at invasion, assassination of Castro, infecting growing farm plants, overflights of spy planes, not to mention the present embargo of over 30 years.

Naturally Khrushchev came to the defense of Cuba, which was under constant threat of annihilation by the United States, just as the Soviet Union was threatened by our missiles pointed at them from Turkey. Khrushchev agreed to remove the Cuban missiles only after Kennedy agreed to remove our missiles in Turkey. This makes Kennedy a hero?

ROBERTA DIAMOND
Los Angeles, CA

Gotcha

Either John J. Fialka or a copyreader of youthful vintage missed the target in the review of Senator Moyni-

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han's book ("Secrets and Lies," Sept. 1998). It's the Norden bombsight, not the "Norden bomb site." Oops.

DICK HERMAN
via e-mail

Off Base

Charles Peters claims that American Jews who are against Netanyahu are in the majority but that a small minority of monied individuals lead the rest around by the nose, including AIPAC, and that Congress has been a saboteur of American foreign policy ("Tilting," July/Aug. 1998). Wrong on all counts! Polls show that a majority of American Jews support the present Israeli government in its search for peace with security despite the vociferous opposition from the White House and the media. Moreover, it is not Congress but the White House that has flaunted long-term U.S. foreign policy, with Madeline Albright, Hillary Clinton, and Mike McCurry all making pronouncements in favor of a Palestinian state and questioning the claim of Israel to its capital of Jerusalem. The Congress has merely reflected the grassroots support of the American Jewish community for a peace process that recognizes the security requirements of the Jewish state and a united Jerusalem.

NELSON MARANS
Silver Spring, MD

I was surprised to find your remarks on Netanyahu and AIPAC (atypically) unfair. It takes two to tango, and the PLO's failure to drop its "Israel to be destroyed" charter, as well as the PL Authority's failure to rein in terrorists, is also anti-Oslo.

As for AIPAC being in the pockets of rich right-wingers, that is no more sound than saying that *Washington Monthly* employees are in the pocket of Warren Buffett. Also, of course Steve Grossman, former AIPAC head, is a Democratic honcho. AIPAC is pro-Israel, not pro-Likud.

To chide American Jews for allying with "right-wingers" since the most vicious anti-Semites are in that wing, is fallaciously going from part to whole. George Will, Richard Grevier, Senator D'Amato, and many others are philo-Semitic and members of the "right." By the by, Jesse Jackson, Louis Farrakhan, Al Sharpton, and David Bonior are not "right wing" and are not noted for their philo-Semitism.

BERNARD ADELMAN
Winthrop, MA

Sore Loser

Robert J. Lowey, in exalting Eugene McCarthy ("Letters," Sept. 1998), finishes by saying of Bobby Kennedy, "Why not lavish praise on someone a little more worthy?" Lowey should apply the same question to McCarthy.

McCarthy has started a number of good things in his life, but has been a poor finisher, due largely to loss of interest. I cannot believe he would have been a good president. When he did not get the nomination in 1968, he decided it did not matter whether Nixon or Humphrey was elected president and withdrew from the scene, despite the fact that Humphrey had given him his start in politics. He might well have changed the outcome in November. By contrast, in 1960, after the Kennedys beat Humphrey to a pulp, Humphrey gave his full support to JFK, who won a narrow victory.

AUGUSTUS C. JOHNSON
via e-mail

Information, Please

The article about trying, often in vain, to get information by telephone from federal agencies ("Sorry, Wrong Number," Sept. 1998) reminded me of my experience a year ago in trying to get information *to* my senators.

Learning that a bill in which I had an interest was coming up for a major vote, I telephoned the Washington offices of both Indiana senators, Lugar and Coats, to ask for their fax numbers. Each office refused to give me the number. In each instance, I said, "Well, if the senator isn't interested in getting the opinion of a constituent on an important piece of legislation, then I guess he won't need my contributions and other support from now on, either." Both offices immediately gave in and gave me the fax number.

WILLIAM H. A. CARR
via e-mail

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

The Folly of Impeachment • Lee's Miserables • Shortchanging Students • The Booze Boys • When in Doubt, Reorganize

THE YEAR 2000 PROBLEM seemed so remote, but now the costs are beginning to be alarming. The latest estimates of the cost to the taxpayer of fixing government computers is $5.4 billion. The OMB reports that the State and Defense departments as well as Education, Energy, Transportation, Health and Human Services, and the Agency for International Development are seriously behind. And it's not just the OMB that is worried. This summer Rep. Stephen Horn, who is chairman of the House Government Reform and Oversight technology subcommittee, gave all these agencies and the EPA a grade of "F" on Year 2000 readiness.

Some real political heat may finally be brought to bear on this problem when my fellow geezers learn that a Year 2000 computer bug could cost them $570 million in Medicare payments.

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IF YOU'VE DOUBTED OUR CONtention that too many American universities are shortchanging their students, consider the example of Virginia Tech. According to Ian Zack of the *Roanoke Times*, Tech professors "teach as many as 50 classes each year with 300 students, 140 classes of 150 to 300 students, and 170 classes of 100 to 150 students." These monster classes mean little of the kind of interaction that makes students—and their teachers—think. Most teachers, even good ones, can't handle large classes. Lionel Trilling was exciting in a small class but boring in a big lecture hall. Only a handful of brilliant law professors seem to know the secret of how to stimulate a room crowded with 150 students. It's Socratic questioning with the victims randomly selected so that every student's mind is alive to the possibility that he may be on the griddle next.

We could train college teachers in this approach. But we don't. Primary and secondary teachers get too much methodology in their training, college teachers typically get none. And this is too bad. A little methodology—if it's smart—could help.

The first four years of the Fiske-Starr inquiry had not been able to lay a glove on Bill or Hillary Clinton.

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IF KEN STARR succeeds in bringing Bill Clinton down, I wonder if history will remember the significance of the following, which is from a Sept. 6 story by Susan Schmidt in *The Washington Post*:

"Starr is almost certain to limit his report to the Lewinsky investigation, sources said. His office considered but decided against including ... other aspects of the four-year investigation. Starr was originally appointed to investigate the Whitewater land venture and a defunct savings and loan in Arkansas. ... Under the independent counsel law, Starr is required to report to the House when he finds 'substantial and credible information' that may constitute grounds for impeachment, but the Whitewater material does *not* meet that standard, sources said." (Italics supplied.)

In other words, the first four years of the Fiske-Starr inquiry had not been able to lay a glove on Bill or Hillary Clinton. Not with Whitewater, not with Vince Foster, not with the FBI files, and not with the White House travel office. Indeed, if Linda Tripp had not taped a friend, Starr would not have an impeachment case.

And what does the case consist of? Evidence that the president tried to cover up an adulterous relationship. That's it. How can anyone be serious about impeaching a president for a sin that is not related to his public duties? Why are the media, as Russell Baker puts it, "now in cahoots with Kenneth Starr to destroy the president"? My guess is it's because they've devoted five years to asserting that there's some kind of major Clinton scandal—and they can't let themselves turn out to have been wrong. They're so desperate that they have turned the inadequacy of Clinton's apology into a federal offense.

I was not for Clinton in the 1992 primaries, as this column made clear. I also wrote a piece for *The Washington Post* which was among the first to take the Flowers tapes seriously, and another for *The New York Times* imploring

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Paul Tsongas not to to drop out of the race. And there is much that I have not admired about Clinton in office, but I continue to think historians will place him in the mid rank of American presidents—if Starr and the press don't destroy him. So to me he's far from being a candidate for impeachment. Rather, he's someone who deserves criticism, but criticism that is directed toward making him a better president, not toward bringing him down.

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IF YOU SOMETIMES SUSPECT the motive behind Paula Jones' lawsuit, you will be interested in this report in the *Greensboro North Carolina News and Record*: "Paula Jones, whose sexual harassment suit against Bill Clinton spawned the investigation that threatens his presidency, is coming to Guilford County for a Republican fund-raiser."

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WHEN THINGS GO WRONG, GOVERNMENT loves to reorganize. It sounds like action is being taken, and it's much easier than identifying the real cause of the problem, especially when the cause may be incompetent employees where firing would involve a lot of trouble for the boss. The latest example is in the Homicide Unit of the District of Columbia's police force, which is infamous for its inability to apprehend any culprit who does not wear a sign saying "I Did It." Instead of firing the inept, here's what a series of police chiefs have done.

The unit was, according to *The Washington Posts*'s Cheryl W. Thompson, "decentralized in 1994 by Chief Fred Thomas. [Chief Larry] Soulsby brought detectives back to headquarters and later, at Booz-Allen's suggestion, sent the detectives back to the seven district stations. Earlier this year, the interim police chief, Sonya T. Proctor, brought the detectives back to headquarters. Under [new police chief Charles] Ramsey's reorganization the 300 detectives now assigned to specialized squads will be moved to the existing seven police districts."

Needless to say, none of these moves appear to have led to the solution of a single murder.

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THE BOOZE BOYS HAVE A NEW target: senior citizens. People over 50 represent a "growth opportunity," Budweiser's August A. Busch IV told *The Wall Street Journal* recently. Wineries like Ernest & Julio Gallo, and distilleries likeUnited Distillers Vintners North America, the company that makes Gordon's Gin, are joining in the push to persuade seniors to drink more. Since so many of the health problems of age are exacerbated by excessive booze, this seems like a really terrible idea, almost as bad as peddling cigarettes to teenagers.

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"NEW YORK CITY HAS CULTIvated an 'in crowd' millions strong," writes Ann Powers in *The New York Times*. "From the City Hall insider to the merchant at the corner bodega, New Yorkers believe that they are tougher, cleverer and more worldly than anyone." If you've ever lived in New York, you know how true this is. Often it's engaging. But sometimes it annoys. "Feeling smugly in the know," words used in the headline over the Powers article, defines those occasions. There is in fact a New York laugh designed to say "I get it and I'm delighted to know that a lot of people won't." The last time I heard the laugh was during a visit to New York when I went to the movies. The Woody Allen movie was playing that contains a dismissive remark about Albert Shanker, the late head of the American Federation of Teachers, that was designed to elicit just this laugh, a laugh that showed awareness that Shanker was at the time despised by the New York elite. Shanker was actually a pretty good fellow. So the laughter was both cruel and wrong.

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FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS NOW it has been fashionable for the big shots of journalism to affect an air of worldly-wise cynicism. Now even the little guys are doing it. A few weeks ago an anchor at Channel 8, a local cable news station in Washington, turned to a reporter who had been giving news about a presidential speech and asked, "Do you expect the White House will be parading their spin doctors all over TV?"

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NEXT TO CYNICISM, THE MOST conspicuous trait of today's journalists is their love of scandal. Consider their insistence on paying more attention to Bill Clinton's sex life than to his performance of his public duties as president. On a day when *The Washington Post* ran "Lieberman, a Senate Ally, Blasts Clinton's Behavior" as the lead story on its front page, you had to search until page 33 to find "Clinton Lauds Peace as Northern Ireland Lauds Him." The next day *The New York Times* ran "Clinton Affirms He Is Very Sorry" on its front page, relegating to the bottom of page three "Neither Rain nor Traffic Dampens Irish Warmth for Clinton."

More importantly, *The Washington Post* of Sept. 6 made us search to page 19 to find a report of a presidential speech about the world economy at the end of a week when the United States and the world were shaken by a severe case of economic anxiety. The *Times* reported another presidential address proclaiming new rules for HMOs on page 21, even though it offered important new protections to 120 million Americans. The *Times* thought this story was worth three paragraphs at the

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end of a week when it devoted at least 200 to Monicagate.

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SPEAKING OF SMUGNESS, HOW about the response of Joan McKown, chief counsel of the SEC's enforcement division, that her agency had let securities law violators escape paying half the fines levied against them: "We're not a collection agency."

I'm curious about how Ms. McKown thinks that the SEC's penalties will be effective if Wall Street's racketeers know they have a 50-50 chance of not having to pay up.

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ROBERT CALVERT Jr., an old friend of mine from my days as a bureaucrat, recently sent a letter to *The Washington Post* protesting the uncritical acceptance by a *Post* reporter of the statistic that federal workers are paid 22.6 percent less than private-sector workers in comparable jobs. Bob pointed out, as I often have in this column, that the federal job descriptions on which the comparison is based are often exaggerated to make the jobs sound considerably more impressive than they really are:

"As a federal GS-15 employee my job description was so inflated that you'd assume I spent most of my day in intense consultation with key members of the ruling party on Capitol Hill and that I'd have very little time left to talk with governors of the various states—particularly those from small ones."

Some federal jobs are underpaid, but for the most part, the pay gap issue is a phony. What we really need is a careful study of jobs that will make the distinction between those that are truly underpaid and those that aren't—on the basis not of fictitious job descriptions, but on what the employee really does.

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THE FASHION INDUSTRY HAS found a new target—"tweens." They are the almost 10 million girls between the ages of five and nine. "The majority of little girls want to look grown up and fashion conscious—it's a trend," the editor of a children's fashion magazine recently told Ruth La Ferla of *The New York Times*. Not only is this absurd, it puts a considerable dent in their parents' pocketbooks. Little black dresses by Nicole Miller go for $90 to $120; a Hermes jacket for $400.

Next to cynicism, the most conspicuous trait of today's journalists is their love of scandal.

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IN MID-SEPTEMBER I had lunch with Matthew Miller, a brilliant young former OMB official who is now trying to launch a column with the *Los Angeles Times* syndicate. When I congratulated him on being among the few not to succumb to get-Clintonitis, he replied, "It's a little scary, though. An awful lot of editors are passionately pro-impeachment. They aren't likely to take on a columnist who disagrees with them on an issue they feel so strongly about."

Few journalists who want to get ahead are going to stand up against the media's frenzy to get the president. The same is true of politicians who want these editors to say good things about them, especially at election time. It isn't lost on them when they see editorial after editorial heaping praise on Joe Lieberman for speaking out against the president.

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LAST MONTH ROBERT WORTH discussed the failure of Al Gore and his reinventors to focus on the quality of the people who work for the federal government. Worth's concerns are supported by a recent report by John M. Palguta, the director of policy and evaluation for the Merit Systems Protection Board. Five years ago he found that half of the government's personnel specialists "lacked sufficient skill." After five years of reinvention, are things any better? "There is no evidence that overall competence ... has improved. If anything, skill levels may actually have declined in some agencies."

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK NOW plans to spend $52 billion over the next 10 years on infrastructure repairs. But a new study by the city comptroller finds that the repairs will cost $90 billion. This is not for frivolous purposes but to keep things like bridges, streets, water mains, and public schools in decent shape.

If this is the figure for just New York, one wonders what the cost will be for the entire country. Shouldn't the tax-cutters consider these costs before they reduce revenues further?

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ADULTS OVER THE AGE OF 80 have higher fatality rates (per miles driven) than any other age group except for 16 year olds, reports a recent study. So, as we've noted before, making it harder for them to renew their licenses would seem to be the right idea. The problem, according to Reuters news service, is that some states are making it easier. Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Louisiana have increased the length of time you can drive without renewing. In Florida, the state with the highest percentage of senior citizens, any driver who hasn't been caught committing a driving offense during the last three years can renew his license by mail and only appear in person every 12 years.

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In Oklahoma a license can be renewed with no test of ability and requires no medical information. Illinois has the most sensible policy. Beginning at age 75 all drivers must renew their licenses in person and take vision and road tests.

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WHEN I WAS A BOY AND FIRST saw the title of Victor Hugo's novel about Jean Valjean displayed on the marquee of a local movie theater, I assumed, to my parents' great amusement, that it was about the Civil War. Now I learn from a new book by J. Tracy Power that some Confederate soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia actually called themselves "Lee's Miserables."

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HAVE YOU SEEN THESE ADS ON TV offering a mortgage loan that exceeds the value of your home? Not only are these ads frightening reminders of the kind of banking practice that has contributed to financial disasters in the past—if the loan is for a greater amount than the value of the home securing it, the chances of default, especially in an era of deflation, are greatly increased—but the institutions peddling the loans seldom mention that the interest is non-deductible on the portion of the loan that exceeds the value of the house.

So, say you now have an $80,000 mortgage on a home worth $100,000. That makes sense for a responsible borrower and a responsible lender, leaving a cushion in the event real estate values go down. But if you are seduced by the ads and take out a second mortgage for $40,000, you're entering risky fiscal territory. And if you try to deduct the interest on your $80,000 first loan and the $40,000 second one, you'll get in trouble with the IRS. All you can deduct is the interest on $100,000, the value of your home. Not on the $120,000 combined value of the two loans.

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ONE OF MY COMPLAINTS against the media is that they devote too little attention to stories about government. *Brill's Content* recently reported a study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism that supports my case. The project studied five network TV shows—"20/20," "48 Hours," "60 Minutes," "Prime Time Live" and "Dateline NBC" for six weeks last fall. Only one devoted any time to a story about government. None, by the way, had stories on the economy. One doubts that that will be true this fall.

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SOME FACTS ABOUT FEDERAL employees you may not know. They get from 13 days to 26 days of vacation a year. These are working days, meaning you really get, with weekends included, 17 to 36 days off. Only academics have a better deal. Civil servants can retire with full pension at age 55 if they have 30 years service. Only about 15 percent of private plans are so generous, reports the Congressional Budget Office. And the CBO adds, the inflation protection that goes with federal pensions is provided by only 8 percent of private plans. And we're talking about private companies that have retirement plans. Half of them don't offer any retirement plans. Unfortunately, only a handful of insiders and friends of insiders know these facts. They are not known by the bright young outsiders whose new blood might revitalize the civil service.

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MONEY BUYS A COLLEGE EDUcation. No, you say, you've heard about need-blind admissions that are supposed to equalize educational opportunity. But they don't do the trick. A recent study found that students who had high test scores but came from families earning less than $25,000 a year were less likely to attend college than all students, regardless of their scores, from families with incomes over $50,000.

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ONE OF THE MOST STRIKING aspects of the Clinton scandal for me is that I find myself disagreeing with a lot of old friends whose opinions I respect. For instance, Tim Noah, who has not been one of the media's Clinton haters, says, "But, Charlie, he committed perjury!" Of course, the minute he said he'd only done it once with Gennifer Flowers, you had to know he was lying.

And I knew why. Men who commit adultery lie to protect the feelings of their wives and to protect themselves from the anger of their wives. They often ask friends to lie for them. The Washington media community is full of people who have done this but now seem unable to forgive Bill Clinton. For me, his Flowers-Jones-Lewinsky-related sins are not nearly as important as his good deeds as president such as on Northern Ireland, Haiti, Bosnia, welfare reform, deficit reduction—or as worthy of condemnation as his official failures, such as his inability to take responsibility for the government under him, from Waco to the IRS. I admired the noble purpose behind his failed health plan but deplored the arrogant complexity that was just as much a factor in its demise as Harry and Louise. These are the things we should focus our criticism on, not his sex life and his lies about it. They deserve an "ugh" from us all. No more.

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"I REMEMBER FEELING THAT soft spot in the northeast corner of your mouth against my lips." These words appear near the beginning of a letter from Lorena Hickok to Eleanor Roosevelt, a letter that closes "I want to put my arms around you and kiss the corner of your mouth." Roosevelt's letters that followed

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The Monthly's Mission

Never has the title of this column seemed so apt. Never has our quest seemed so improbable. At a time when the polls tell us that interest in politics and government has sunk to an all-time low, when they show that young people disdain careers in public life, we want to wake people up to the crucial importance of government, why they should care about how well it is working and how it can be made better. At its best, government can protect us from everything from dangerous microbes to a deranged Hitler. So it makes sense to try to make it work.

We try to avoid being nasty or heavy. As much as we can, we use humor to criticize the government—and the press and other elites that influence it. We want to make our colleagues in the press laugh at their own cynicism and preoccupation with scandal. We want to challenge them to bring their intelligence to bear on important issues like health care and education for those who are being cheated by the present system. We want to help the elite laugh at itself so it will devote more attention to what's good for us all and less to the matters of money and self that absorb it now.

We mean to continue trying to do these things even though they seem unlikely. But we know that it's important for people on unlikely quests to have a sense of humor about themselves in order to keep grounded in reality. Toward that end, we hope you will act as our Sancho Panza, helping us laugh at ourselves when we need to.

The *Monthly* is above all a community in which all the people who have worked here over the years and our readers participate. You'll notice that our alumni Nicholas Lemann, James Fallows, and Timothy Noah are writing for this issue. You may not notice that items throughout the magazine are based on tips and clips sent by our readers. But you can look at our letters section and see that we count on them to point out when we've gone astray. We hope those of you who are reading us for the first time will want to participate too. Together we just might make a difference. At least they'll never be able to say we didn't try.

included such expressions as "All my love," "I love you deeply and tenderly." Anticipating Hickok's return to Washington, she wrote: "Dear one, it's getting nearer and nearer and I am half afraid to be too happy. It's the way I felt as a child when I dreaded disappointment. A world of love, E.R."*

What would have happened to one of the most important First Ladies in American history if the scandalmongering media of today had existed in the 1930s and had gotten hold of these letters?

Or suppose Ken Starr had been around in the summer of 1962 to subpoena the White House logs. On just one day, August 6, the day after Marilyn Monroe's suicide, they would have shown that the president got two calls from a "Judith Campbell," and one from "Mrs. Mary Myer." Judith Campbell, better known as Judith Exner, and Mary Meyer (the correct spelling) were mistresses of John Kennedy. "That evening, while Mary was with Kennedy at the White House," writes Nina Burleigh in *A Very Private Woman*, "Mrs. Kennedy called and was told the president was out. Peter Lawford, who was in the thick of the [Marilyn Monroe] suicide by virtue of having spoken with Marilyn just before she died, called Kennedy from from Beverly Hills and got through. At 11:28 Kennedy called for a car to be sent to the South Gate, presumably to take Mary home."

If all that had come out at the time, would Kennedy have been forced to resign? Maybe. Maybe not. But he certainly would have been crippled during the nation's gravest moment since World War II, the Cuban Missile Crisis, which began just six weeks later. ●

* From *Empty Without You: The Intimate Letters of Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok*, edited by Rodger Streitmatter. Free Press, 1998.

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A New Prescription

Investing in substance-abuse treatment would take a big bite out of crime

BY JOSEPH A. CALIFANO JR.

IF, AS CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS agree, the most basic responsibility of government is to protect the public safety of its citizens, then the failure to treat and train the 1.2 million alcohol and drug abusers and addicts crowding America's prisons is the nation's most egregious display of public irresponsibility.

In America crime and alcohol and drug abuse are joined at the hip. For two decades we have been filling prisons with drug and alcohol abusers and addicts and, without treatment or training, returning them to society to resume the criminal activity spawned by their substance abuse. In 1997 more Americans were in prison, most of them substance abusers, than graduated from college. This is public policy crafted in the theater of the absurd and acted out by political demagogues.

Individuals who commit serious offenses such as drug dealing and violent and property crimes belong in prison. But it is just as much in the interest of public safety to rehabilitate those who can be redeemed as it is to keep incorrigibles behind bars. The great disconnect in current criminal justice policy is that we are not doing well on either track.

Missed Opportunities

More than 1.8 million individuals are behind bars in America: 1,130,000 in state prisons, 568,000 in local jails and 113,000 in federal prisons. Eighty percent—1,450,000 inmates—either violated drug or alcohol laws, were high at the time of their offense, stole property to buy drugs, have histories of drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, or share some mix of these characteristics. Tragically, among these 1,450,000 inmates are the parents of 2.4 million children.

JOSEPH A. CALIFANO JR. *is president of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.*

Some 200,000 of these prisoners are drug dealers who don't use drugs. The remaining 1.2 million are drug and alcohol abusers and addicts. Some would have committed their crimes regardless of their substance abuse. But hundreds of thousands are individuals whose core problem is the abuse and addiction that prompted their criminal activity. They would be law-abiding, working, taxpaying citizens and responsible parents if they lived sober lives.

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University estimates that for an additional $6,500 a year, an inmate could be given intensive treatment, education and job training. Upon release, each one who worked at the average wage of a high school graduate for a year would provide a return on investment of $68,800 in reduced criminal activity, savings in arrest, prosecution, incarceration and health care costs, and benefit to the economy. If all 1.2 million inmates with drug and alcohol problems got such treatment and training (cost: $7.8 billion) and only 10 percent became sober, working citizens (benefit: $8.26 billion), the investment would more than pay for itself during their first year of work. Thereafter, the nation would receive a benefit of more than $8 billion for each year those released inmates remain employed and drug and crime free.

The potential crime reduction is also big league. Expert estimates of crimes committed by drug addicts range from 89 to 191 a year. At the conservative end, successfully treating and training just 10,000 drug addicts would eliminate 1 million crimes a year. That's the kind of return on investment to capture the imagination of any businessman. Getting through to our politicians is another matter.

After three years studying the relationship between prison inmates and substance abuse, I am convinced that the present system of prison and pun-

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Between 1980 and 1997 the number of prison inmates jumped 261 percent, from 502,000 to 1,811,000.

ishment only is insane public policy. Despite tougher sentencing laws, on average inmates are released in 18 months to four years. Even those convicted of such violent crimes as aggravated assault and robbery are out in three to four years.

Releasing drug and alcohol addicts and abusers without treatment or training is tantamount to visiting criminals on society. Releasing drug addicts is a government price-support program for the illegal drug market. Temporarily housing such prisoners without treating and training them is a profligate use of public funds and the greatest missed opportunity to cut crime further.

Currently, we have in America a prison population the size of Houston, Texas, the nation's fourth largest city. If we don't deal with alcohol and drug abuse and revamp our system of crime and justice, one of every 20 Americans born in 1997 will spend some time in jail, including one of every 11 men and one of every four black men.

The first step toward sensible criminal policy is to face reality. Prisons are wall-to-wall with drug and alcohol addicts and abusers. Popular perceptions of inmates shaped by vivid movie and television images of playful Bonnies and Clydes, mafia dons like Marlon Brando who refuse to deal drugs, and psychopaths like James Cagney in the 1930s gangster films are ancient history. For eight out of 10 inmates in the 1990s, substance abuse has been the defining characteristic of their lives and criminal histories.

Appropriate substance abuse treatment has a higher success rate than many long-shot cancer therapies. It could certainly help 20 percent of the substance abusers in prison: That's a quarter of a million criminals who could be turned into law-abiding citizens and good parents.

Substance abuse and the failure to treat it in the criminal population are tightly associated with recidivism. The more prior convictions an individual has, the more likely that individual is a drug abuser. In state prisons, 41 percent of first offenders have used drugs regularly, compared to 63 percent of inmates with two prior convictions, and 81 percent of those with five or more. State prison inmates with five or more convictions are seven times likelier than first offenders to be heroin addicts and three times likelier to be hooked on crack. Only 25 percent of federal inmates with no prior convictions are regular drug users, but 71 percent of those with five of more convictions have histories of regular drug use. The recidivism-drug abuse relationship is similar among the local jail population.

Alcohol abuse is the first cousin of violent crime. More widely available than illicit drugs like heroin, cocaine, and LSD, alcohol is a bigger culprit in connection with murder, rape, assault, and child and spouse abuse than any illegal drug. Of state prisoners incarcerated for violent crimes, 21 percent were under the influence of alcohol alone when they committed their offense; only 3 percent were under the influence of cocaine or crack alone, and only 1 percent were under the influence of heroin alone. The situation is similar among federal prisoners.

The common denominator among inmates is not race; it's drug and alcohol abuse. Blacks are disproportionately represented in prison. Though they make up only 11 percent of the adult population, they constitute 46 percent of state, 42 percent of jail and 30 percent of federal inmates. Whites, 76 percent of the adult population, comprise 35 percent of state, 39 percent of jail and 38 percent of federal inmates. However, essentially the same proportions of black and white (and Hispanic) state inmates, 61 to 65 percent, are regular drug users.

With rehabilitation of the bulk of the prison population dependent on breaking inmates' substance abuse and addiction, mandatory sentences—especially those that require the convict to serve the entire sentence imposed—subvert rather than promote the public safety. Corrections officials need every possible carrot and stick to get inmates into treatment, including the carrot of reduced prison time for substance-abusing inmates who successfully complete treatment and the stick of prompt return to jail for parolees who fail to participate in post-release treatment and aftercare. Mandatory sentences take away any hope of early release for entering treatment and the threat of immediate return to prison for failure to stay off drugs and alcohol. Mandatory sentences also deny judges and

sextupled, from 24,000 to 151,000. ● America is the world leader in incarceration: the rate for adults was 868 per

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The number of men behind bars more than tripled, from 478,000 to 1,660,000; the number of women more than

prosecutors flexibility to divert substance-abusing defendants into treatment, drug courts, coerced abstinence and other alternatives to prison which hold the potential of reducing recidivism and crime.

Religion (notably Christianity and Islam) and spirituality can play a role often decisive in the rehabilitation of many inmates. Inmates and treatment providers commonly cite spirituality, God, or a Higher Power as a factor in getting and staying sober, coping with prison life, successfully reentering the community, and ending criminal conduct. Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs stress the role of spirituality in recovery. A study of New York State inmates in the Prison Fellowship programs founded by Charles Colson showed that inmates who were active in bible studies were less likely to commit infractions while incarcerated and be arrested during a one year follow-up after release than those who were less active or did not participate in such programs. Only 14 percent of program participants were arrested compared to the 41 percent of nonparticipants.

The expense of building and operating prisons is the 800-pound gorilla in most state budgets, with spending rising at a breakneck pace, up 28 percent in 1996, compared to a three percent increase in Medicaid spending. That year Americans paid $38 billion in taxes to build and operate 4,700 prisons 1,403 state, 82 federal and 3,304 local.

Politicians camouflage the failure of their punishment-only prisons by huffing and puffing tough rhetoric. Each year they pass tougher sentencing laws, build more prisons and hire more prison guards. These governors, presidents and legislators are like a chorus of children reciting together, "If all the king's horses and all the kings men can't put Humpty Dumpty back together again, then give us more horses and give us more men."

Recently politicians have rushed to cite reductions in crime as their success story. There has been a significant decline in crime in most cities and states in America. But most of that drop appears due to the lower number of drug and alcohol abusers and addicts on the street, an assessment shared by many street ethnographers who survey conditions by talking to police, drug dealers, and addicts. In turn this decrease is also due to the increased numbers of substance abusers behind bars, thanks to stepped-up law enforcement and more prison sentences.

But, politicians beware. Though you've put lots more drug and alcohol addicts and abusers in prison, they will be coming out, sooner than you think. Thus, a critical component of sustaining this lower crime rate is to get as many of these incarcerated addicts and abusers as possible in recovery. Indeed, failure to do so will be the greatest missed opportunity to continue to drive the crime rate down and enter the next millennium with enhanced public safety.

Putting resources behind the rhetoric of rehabilitation in the 1990s requires a sea change in the way Americans think about prisoners and prisons. It will also call for a genuine display of courage from our nation's political leaders to convince citizens to invest tax dollars in the treating, educating and training of offenders. Drug Czar General Barry McCaffrey has begun to provide some cover to our politicians. Building on the report of The National Center On Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, *Behind Bars: Substance Abuse and America's Prison Population*, McCaffrey called a conference of treatment experts in Washington to produce a consensus on the effectiveness of treatment and training in prisons. He plans a conference of state legislators and others to promote the idea of treating drug and alcohol addicts who commit crimes. Politicians who want to further reduce crime and the costs of incarceration would do well to take McCaffrey's political cover to convince citizens that treating and training substance abusing offenders is not coddling criminals; it is opening a second front in the war on crime for their own protection.

If Christian compassion won't move our citizens to invest the resources needed to rehabilitate drug and alcohol abusing offenders, then maybe the realization that they are protecting their own lives and property will. By opening in the nation's prisons a second front in the war on crime, we will save billions of dollars, make our streets and homes a lot safer and reclaim thousands of individuals to lives as responsible parents, hard workers, taxpayers, and law-abiding citizens.

100,000 in 1996, compared to fewer than 100 per 100,000 in most European countries and 47 per 100,000 in Japan.

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Love Potion No. 9.1

Viagra is just the latest weapon in Americans' battle with Mother Nature

BY MICHELLE COTTLE

A FEW MONTHS AGO, I WAS A GUEST ON a radio talk show to discuss men's growing obsession with their appearance and how a new breed of men's magazines is feeding that obsession. The only woman on the panel, I was joined by editors from *Men's Health*, *GQ*, and *National Geographic Traveler*. Dismissing my comparison of men's magazines to publications such as *Cosmo* and *Glamour*, two of my fellow panelists—in all earnestness, mind you—assured our listening audience that the influence of men's mags on readers is completely different from that of women's magazines because "men process information very differently than women. Men aren't as obsessive."

I have only one word for these budding psychiatrists: Viagra.

It has been six months since Pfizer pharmaceuticals unleashed its wonder drug to combat erectile dysfunction on an unsuspecting—albeit receptive—public. Since then, the news has been awash in stories of the sales records being set (4.3 million prescriptions as of late August), the gushings of satisfied users, the lamentations of besieged doctors, the black markets for the pill that are thriving overseas (it's reportedly selling for $100 a pop in Kuwait), and the ongoing battle over whether insurers will cover the drug. (Some will. Some won't. Some will pay for only four or six or eight pills per month.) Even reports of several dozen potentially Viagra-related deaths—many occurring during or just after sex—have done little to dampen demand. Thus far, only la femme Monica has generated more buzz this year.

At the heart of all this sound and fury lies a fundamental truth: Men are obsessed with their penises. They fret about size, frequency of use, and most certainly—how do I put this delicately?—whether all systems are go. Now, erectile dysfunction is a very real problem. (The term "impotent" is thankfully going the way of the equally enlightened "barren.") Diabetes, prostate cancer, injury—any number of unfortunate events can deprive a man of his ability to perform sexually. And for a gender so wrapped up in its genitalia, the impact on one's psyche can be devastating. The collective pain of men concerning this issue is so sorely felt—as is the jubilation over Pfizer's pharmacological miracle—that Alan Greenberg, chairman of Bear Stearns, recently donated $1 million to finance Viagra prescriptions for needy brethren.

The furor over Viagra, however, goes way beyond the quest to correct a physical ailment. Doctors report that many Viagra supplicants don't technically suffer from erectile dysfunction, but hope to "enhance" their sexual experiences, to increase the number of times they can have intercourse, to, as more than one senior gentleman has crowed, "feel like [they're] 18-years-old again."

Make no mistake: Women like sex too. Whether you credit (or blame) feminism, birth control, or the decline of American morals, the typical female view of sex in this country is a far cry from the Victorian attitude of "shut your eyes and think of England." But to screw or not to screw is often a complicated question for women, tangled up with a variety of related, even contradictory, issues—guilt, independence, intimacy, pregnancy, health, love, commitment. For men, the equation tends to be much simpler: More is better. At the risk of stereotyping, the male gender too often views sex as the end-all be-all of human existence and the ultimate gauge of one's status as A Man. (As such, it's hardly shocking that even the most conservative survey findings show that one in four married men admit to having cheated on their wives.) As one TV comedian put it: "The difference in the way

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men and women think about sex is like the difference between shooting a bullet and throwing it."

Great Expectations

Panic-stricken by the tsunami of demand for Viagra, many insurance companies plan to cover the drug only for serious sufferers of erectile dysfunction. But trying to sort recreational Viagrans from the truly Viagra needy may prove an exercise in futility. The current definition of and statistics on ED are vague—and somewhat misleading. Because of the sensitive nature of the condition, accurate figures on its prevalence are hard to come by. Last year, in pre-Viagra America, only an estimated 1.8 million men were receiving treatment for the disorder. According to the best estimates of the National Institutes of Health, however, somewhere between 10 and 20 million American men actually suffer from erectile dysfunction, defined as "the inability to achieve or maintain an erection sufficient for satisfactory sexual performance." Toss in men plagued by "partial erectile dysfunction," and the number creeps closer to 30 million—nearly one-quarter of all men in this country. With these kind of figures being bandied about, who could blame the public for fearing that ED has, as one business publication put it, become "a national epidemic"?

Upon closer examination, however, the numbers prove specious at best. First off, which is it: 10 million or 20 million ED sufferers? We're talking about a potential difference here equal to the total populations of New York and Chicago combined. Also, the phrase "sufficient for satisfactory sexual performance" injects considerable wiggle room into the equation. Does this mean unable to have sex at all? Unable to have sex as hot as the sex you enjoyed as a teenager? In the landmark Massachusetts Male Aging Study, 52 percent of men ages 40 to 70 were characterized as experiencing erectile dysfunction. But only 10 percent actually could not achieve erection. The other 42 percent had problems sufficient to interfere with normal sex. And what about the additional 10 million men suffering "partial" ED? Can they have a "satisfactory" experience only once a week? Once a month? One middle-aged victim of partial ED told *Newsweek* that he started taking Viagra because, although he could achieve erections, he felt that they "should have been stronger and much longer-lasting." Thus, it appears our national ED "epidemic" is a product not only of men's medical malfunctions, but also of their high expectations.

But here's the real kicker: According to NIH, the majority of men suffering from "erectile dysfunction" are age 65 or older. (Here we must tread carefully to avoid accusations of agism.) Certainly, there is no upper age limit on sex. With the average life span now hovering around 76, it's nice to think that we'll all be shagging away well into our golden years. But as people grow older, they slow down physically. Certain things simply do not work as well as they did in years gone by: eyes, ears, knees, kidneys, lungs. (Already I must face the fact that my metabolism no longer permits me to eat gallons of Häagen Dazs with impunity.) In recent years, healthier lifestyles and medical advances have slowed this physical disintegration, while cosmetic surgery, Propecia, Rogaine, and Retin-A help mask the outward signs of aging. Nonetheless, you can get face lifts until your tear ducts stop working and your cheeks are stretched as taut as a trampoline; it does not change the fact that your skin is aging. The same is true of the human reproductive system, and on a certain level we recognize this. How often do you hear the millions of women over 65 who can no longer have children characterized as suffering from "fertility dysfunction"? Never. The female reproductive system has a limited shelf life. Sometime around age 50—or 55 or 60—women run headlong into "the change." Our estrogen level shoots through the floor, we suffer hot flashes and some truly spectacular mood swings, and we lose the capacity to bear children. There is nothing dysfunctional about the process. It is not a disease to be treated. It is the reality of growing older. And in the spirit of fair play, the same holds true for men. By lumping the sexual difficulties of 70-year-old men together with those of 35-year-olds, our youth-worshipping culture is merely trying to deny a fundamental reality: Parts wear out—especially moving parts.

There is a certain dispassionate logic at work in nature, and if we wanted to be particularly harsh about the millions of seniors facing "erectile dysfunction," we could argue that nature did not intend for men to continue sowing their seed well into old age. From a purely Darwinian perspective, nature's idea of the ideal father is most likely not a 75-year-old who, odds are, won't be around to see his newborn son enter junior high. The fact that some men can sire children in their old age does not mean that all men were meant to do so.

Applying Darwinian logic to human beings, however, seems simplistic. Overcoming the limitations with which nature has attempted to saddle us is what drives our species. (Besides, if there's one thing modern man has tried to do—much to the distress of the

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Catholic Church—it is separate sex from procreation.) In fact, Viagra is simply the latest step in the medicalization of nature in this country: our growing tendency to treat any less-than-desirable characteristic as a medical disorder to be eradicated. It's not just that we don't want to grow old; it's that we are increasingly intolerant of any abnormalities, inconsistencies, or even annoying personality traits in our citizenry. Twenty years ago, elementary school children were expected to be a bit hyperactive (at least in the eyes of adults). Today, fidgety kids are labeled ADD and dosed with Ritalin until they can sit still in math class. Ten years ago, moodiness was understood to be a part of adolescence. Today, we have Prozac for teens (as well as for every actor, writer, stock broker, teacher, and housewife who thinks his or her temperament should be more even-keeled.) Forget genetic engineering; the drug companies are already working to create the "perfect" human specimen. Yes, as with Viagra, some people would be lost without such medications. But we seem to be rapidly blurring the line separating serious disorders from

Who's Who

By Susan Threadgill

If we were **Paula Jones'** attorneys we would be enchanted by the possibilities opened by this tidbit that was buried near the end of a long *Washington Post* story about **Monica Lewinsky**. It's a quote from the attorney for **Marsha Scott**, the White House deputy director of personnel, about something Lewinsky, who was complaining about being transferred from the White House to the Pentagon, said to Scott: "I never had an affair with the president, but all the others who have get to stay." *All* the *others*?

Washington is, as we all know, a city of complex relationships. One example you may not know: **Clinton** critic **Joe Lieberman** is the godfather of Clinton defender **Lanny Davis**' son.

A reader reminds us that **Rep. Philip Crane**, who has called **Bill Clinton**'s affair with **Monica Lewinsky** an "international disgrace" and suggested the president resign, took a more charitable view when his brother, then-**Rep. Daniel Crane**, was caught in a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old female page. At the time, Philip Crane issued a statement saying the issue was a "personal matter between Danny, his wife and children, and God Almighty."

When **Ken Starr** was a student at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., he was, professor **Tom Howard** tells *U.S. News & World Report*, a member of the Young Democrats Club.

As Comptroller of the Currency, **Eugene Ludwig**'s duties included the regulation of banks. When he resigned, he got a really nifty job with Bankers' Trust, the nation's seventh largest bank. According to *American Banker* magazine—we never miss an issue—Ludwig was given a bonus of $1 million on his first day at his new post. Cynics may suspect that this was a reward for past regulatory indulgence. But we of course remain confident that it represents nothing more than recognition of his potential as a bank executive.

If **George W. Bush** wins the presidency the next Whitewater may be called Rainwater, in honor of **Richard Rainwater**, a Fort Worth billionaire who, according to **R.G. Ratcliffe** of the *Houston Chronicle*, "is largely responsible for Bush's wealth" and "controls companies that have received millions of dollars worth of favorable actions from the state of Texas."

The weekend before **Bill Clinton**'s grand jury testimony, one veteran Washington observer who is sympathetic to the president tells us he began to fear that the president might become unglued on Monday. Why? Because leaks from the president's lawyers—we don't know whether they came from **David Kendall**, **Mickey Kantor**, or **Charles Ruff**—had begun to appear in the press saying that he was distracted and not devoting enough time to preparing himself to testify. The story seemed, he said, designed to protect the lawyers if things went awry and was unsettling because they had seemed so protective of him rather than of themselves in the past. If nothing else, he felt it

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physical imperfections, personality quirks, and garden variety aging.

User Beware

Abstract philosophical concerns aside, getting millions of older men revved up to reenter the wonderful world of intercourse presents some decidedly practical dangers. On the most basic level, there is the question of physical strain. Just as the 75-year-old penis isn't what it used to be, neither is the 75-year-old heart. Popping a pill to rejuvenate the former does nothing to shore up the latter. And while doctors can lecture about the hazards of mixing meds (the combination of Viagra with some nitrate-based medications has proved fatal) and of overexerting oneself (a person's heart rate and adrenaline level jump dramatically during sex), more than a few men will allow the prospect of "getting some" to override their common sense.

Then there are the less tangible side effects of Viagra fever. As noted earlier, men place too much importance on their sexual equipment. (Perhaps 30

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meant that the president was likely to get into deeper trouble because of his lack of preparation. "It's like a presidential debate, you have to work hard beforehand to anticipate the hard questions you're certain to be asked."

Speaking of **Lanny Davis**, he tells *The Washington Post* that "he's had trouble bringing in new business because potential clients worry about his close identification with the administration." To supplement his income, he's teaching a course at George Washington University. Guess what the subject is? Scandal management.

One sign that **Fred Thompson** will seek the White House in 2000 is that he's hired **Powell Moore** as his chief of staff. Moore has, according to **Mary Lynn F. Jones** of *The Hill*, "worked for every GOP presidential candidate since 1972."

Traditionally White House aides have fought over perks ranging from chauffered cars to White House Mess privileges. One we hadn't heard about until it was called to our attention by *The Washington Post*'s **Al Kamen** is the Senior Staff Exercise Room in Room 11 of the Old Executive Office Building, which is of course just a few steps from the White House. The facilities may not be impressive but only the top 50 White House staff members may enter. "It was my favorite place," **George Stephanopoulos** told Kamen. "It was on-campus, it had a

ART BY ROMAN GENN

treadmill and a television, and the phone had a pleasant ding-dong."

If you thought **James Carville** would be all for outing the sexual skeletons in the closet of those who are outraged by **Bill Clinton**'s affairs, please note that he would exempt one profession: political consultants. After *Salon* outed a few others, including **Dick Morris**, Carville wrote "Isn't there a danger here that we might be going too far?" Perish the thought, but could James have something to hide?

Our friend had one other observation. "To the extent **Bill Clinton** is responsible for his troubles, two causes stick out. The obvious one is his self-indulgence. The other is his fear of **Hillary Clinton**'s anger, which was a major factor in the original stonewalling on Whitewater, which she favored and which he went along with because the recent Troopergate revelations about **Paula** and other women had placed him firmly in the domestic doghouse. Similarly, his lies in the Paula Jones case seem most likely to have been motivated by a desire not to upset the First Lady. And the modified limited stonewall of his 'apology' the night of the grand jury testimony seems to have been a concession to the First Lady and the lawyer she selected, **David Kendall**. Certainly everyone on the White House staff will tell you that the staff favored a more generous concession just as they had when the Whitewater story became a problem."

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seconds after Viagra hit the stores, jokes started flying about how—had women been in charge of R&D at Pfizer—the company would have developed a pill to make men more sensitive, better listeners, less afraid of commitment, more conscientious about putting the toilet seat down, and so on.) When the demanding little organ starts slowing down due to age, many men are forced to focus on other aspects of sex: intimacy, romance, foreplay. Couples gradually adjust to a physical life not centered around intercourse and discover other ways to express affection. What will the return of the raging phallus mean for these men's lovers? Some women will be thrilled; others may find themselves confronted by a 70-year-old Romeo who can't understand why his 70-year-old Juliet doesn't want to go at it again tonight. (Still other women might be thrilled if they could just stop worrying that Hubby was about to suffer a coital coronary.)

In the worst case scenario, our rejuvenated Romeos, their revivified manhood not properly appreciated at home, will go in search of newer-model Juliets. Already the allegations are flying. This May, a 63-year-old Long Island woman sued her 70-year-old common-law husband for $2 million, claiming that, upon obtaining a Viagra prescription, the man had promptly started running around with another woman. Likewise, a 67-year-old Florida man recently shared with *The New York Times* the role Viagra played in his decision to leave his wife of 46 years and move in with a woman half his age. It was his renewed sexual prowess, the man explained, that "gave him the confidence to see other women."

ART BY JOSHUA BARLOW

One gets the uneasy feeling that such stories will not prove isolated incidents. For decades, a not insubstantial number of older men—especially successful older men—have considered a hot young babe to be the ultimate reward for their years of hard work. Thus, the new, younger girlfriend or trophy wife has become a depressingly clichéd symbol of the male mid-life crisis. (As one sanguine 73-year-old remarked to *The New York Times*: "What [Viagra users] need is not a pill but an 18-year-old girl.") What if the nation's "epidemic" of erectile dysfunction is all that has thus far prevented hordes of senior and middle-aged men from trying to charm impressionable young law clerks and interns out of their pantyhose? Just six months into the Viagra revolution, who knows how many rejuvenated Don Juans have begun eyeing their honey-limbed administrative assistants? Granted, we're not likely to see randy seniors flooding the divorce courts in coming months—or confront a geriatric version of the 1960s' free-love movement. Still, Viagra's potential contribution to the breakdown of the American family should keep the social conservatives up at night.

At least one Viagra defender has argued that claiming the drug will encourage older men to cheat is tantamount to claiming that giving teenagers condoms will encourage them to have sex. There are, however, a couple of basic flaws in this argument: 1.) Providing teenage Lotharios access to condoms, while perhaps giving them a sense of readiness, does not instill in them a heightened sense of virility. Teenage boys can "be a man" with or without a condom. The message of Viagra is that it can give older men back the lost manhood of their youth. Considering the aforementioned link between a man's self-worth and his sexual equipment, this is a dangerous promise to be peddling. 2. Teenage boys are already obsessed with sex 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Their hormones are raging. They get excited when the wind blows. The same is generally not true for more mature gentlemen—at least, not to the same degree. Clinically speaking, a 60-year-old man's hormones are not raging. While sex is still a glorious thing, older men are occasionally able to focus on other matters. Viagra helps move that focus back down below the belt.

Which brings us to perhaps the most disturbing potential impact of Viagra: Even allowing that existing demand for the drug was substantial, once a product hits the marketplace, the buzz it generates—aided by the marketing efforts of its manufacturer—creates even more demand. In this country, we use sex to up the demand for blue jeans, beer, shampoo, cars, and breakfast cereal. It won't take any advertising genius for Pfizer to sell sex itself to the American public.

And as the hysteria over Viagra grows, it reinforces the notion that, if a man isn't the sex machine he was in days gone by, there must be something wrong with him. Thus, our society—with a little help from Madison Avenue—continues to manufacture need, raising the bar for what is "normal" ever higher. ●

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Achilles Heel

Why our top political leaders are easy targets for terrorists

BY JASON BRYSON-ALDERMAN

WHEN A LONE SCHIZOPHRENIC broke into the U.S. Capitol building in July and killed two security guards, many Americans were astonished. How could anyone—let alone a madman—get past the armed guards stationed everywhere, the sophisticated equipment designed to detect weapons, and the large barriers to stop unauthorized vehicles? The answer is that the Capitol is not the fortress it seems. In fact, it's more like the Maginot Line: a strongly defended front that is highly vulnerable to attack from behind. The current security system may have been relatively effective years ago, but in today's world, where weapons are too easily available, it's a disaster waiting to happen.

I spent several years working on Capitol Hill as a congressional aide. In that time I learned the ins and outs, as well as the practices, rules, and customs, of Congress and its employees. I also discovered serious flaws in Capitol Hill security. Not only did I stumble across a way to turn a member's Lincoln Town Car into a time bomb on wheels, but I also saw how easy it would be to carry a loaded gun into the Capitol complex without anyone knowing. These security problems do not stem from any failings on the part of the Capitol Police, the special force created to guard Capitol Hill and protect members of Congress. I believe them to be brave, well trained, and effective. The problem is that they're required to treat members of Congress and staff with kid gloves.

Let's start with the car scenario. Most members have no bodyguards and simply drive themselves to their homes at the end of the day. Not only are they vulnerable to being followed, but members' cars often stick out like sore thumbs. The majority of states issue special license plates for members of Congress that identify the owner and his or her congressional district. In fact, members enjoy having these special tags labeling them as VIPs—it often gets them out of parking and speeding tickets and ensures that valets are extra careful.

After following a member home, a terrorist could simply wait in the shadows until late at night, then slip out and break into the trunk of the car. Very few members' vehicles are guarded at their home and a tour through any congressional garage reveals that almost none have car alarms installed. They simply drive to their homes and park in a standard two-car garage. Many members, especially those who live in D.C., park on the street at night.

I learned what an easy matter opening a locked car trunk is when I mistakenly left my keys in the trunk of my Ford Taurus while on vacation in Maryland. The AAA-dispatched locksmith arrived with a small box filled with keys. He said that Ford made only a few dozen different types of keys for the Taurus and that one of the keys in his box would match my set locked in the trunk. Sure enough, after trying 10 different keys, one worked and my trunk popped open. If a country locksmith can open a car trunk in five minutes, then we should expect a motivated and skilled terrorist to be able to do the same. Once the terrorist had placed a high-powered bomb in the member's trunk, the hard part would be over. The odds are small that the senator or congressman would check their trunk in the morning.

Upon arriving at the Capitol, the unaware member would be waved through security automatically.

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Members' cars are never inspected in any way while they are driving them. To do so would show disrespect and risk drawing the ire of the congressperson. As a result, members are allowed without question into the garages and parking areas that are off limits to the public. And while the trunks of staff-owned cars are occasionally inspected, the reality is that on any given day the vast majority are never even stopped. My anecdotal observation indicated that approximately one staffer's car in 10 is inspected upon entering the garage. When working on the Hill, I can remember weeks at a stretch where I wasn't asked to open my trunk. It is understandable why; there was only one guard in charge of car inspections at the popular C Street entrance to the Rayburn House Office Building garage.

At noon, parked 30 feet from the Capitol dome, the congressman's car would explode. A large hunk of the building could be sheared off, killing dozens of passersby and possibly hundreds within, including many of the country's foremost political leaders.

That's My Lunchbox

For terrorists without access to bombs, getting a gun into the Capitol would be just as easy. As any visitor to the Capitol knows, entering the building requires passing through a metal detector and having all bags run through an x-ray machine. On some days, especially when schools are out of session, this security screening can result in long lines. While most tourists, lobbyists, and vendors resign themselves to such a wait, members and staff would consider such a delay to be an affront and a waste of their time. As a result, members are simply waved through at special entrances. And while staff members must show their congressional ID card and open any bags they are carrying, this casual check is almost meaningless. Staff ID is unsophisticated, akin more to the simple types used by exercise clubs and universities, than to the complex ones issued as driver's licenses. There is no hologram or intricate pattern, just a picture of the bearer, a replica of the House seal, and a few lines of text. Terrorists adept at forging passports and other sophisticated documents would need very little time to create a fake House ID. To make matters worse, no metal detectors, x-ray machines, or computerized ID verification devices are employed at these entryways.

Equipped with a phony ID, a terrorist could easily bring a gun or other similarly sized weapon into any of the House office buildings. All it would take would be to place the gun in a false compartment of a briefcase or even inside a suit pocket. Then he or she could join the mass of staffers entering the building at 8:30 a.m. on any given workday.

At that time of the day, when many staffers are clamoring to enter the building at the same time, the Capitol Police screen very quickly. They glance momentarily at the ID, then ask to look in the bag. There is no electronic or manual verification done to ensure that the ID is genuine. So long as the ID looks normal and the picture matches the person holding it, no one is ever questioned. The bag inspection usually involves the Capitol Police officer looking down at it as the staffer holds it open. I have never seen a thorough search involving the removal of the bag's contents. Moreover, I have never seen the Capitol Police check the clothing pockets of the staff entering. The bulge in my left breast pocket from my glasses case could just as easily have been caused by a weapon; I was never asked to open my jacket and reveal it.

Most likely the reason for this oversight is that Capitol Police officers deal with egotistical people all day long. They have come to learn that if they push staff or members too far they will get at best a rude response and at worst a strongly worded letter to their supervisor. As a result, they self-censor, avoiding conflicts with brusque staff who often view them as nothing more than glorified shopping mall security guards.

Once inside the House or Senate office building with a gun, a terrorist would be virtually unimpeded from killing his congressional target or random victims. The only other security checkpoints in these office buildings are the ones posted in tunnels that lead to the Capitol.

But a clever terrorist would never need to go to the Capitol to find his prey. Despite appearances on C-SPAN, most members spend only a fraction of their time on the House or Senate floor. Most of their working day is spent in their personal offices or attending committee meetings. And the majority of these offices and committee rooms are not in the Capitol building, but rather in the House and Senate office buildings. Committee meetings are open to the public (except for those that deal with national security issues) and the prospect of having 20 members all sitting next to each other on a raised dais would be an inviting target to any armed terrorist.

As if these opportunities were not appealing enough, a terrorist would have plenty of chances to wreak havoc at one of the many social receptions held each night Congress is in session. On the House

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side, these gatherings are often held in the Rayburn Gold Room or the Cannon Caucus Room, and metal detectors are rarely posted at them. Attracting anywhere from 1 to 50 members, depending upon the size and clout of the special interest group sponsoring the event, a terrorist could take his pick of VIP targets.

Tighten it Up

What can be done to fix these potentially life-threatening problems? While I am sure the professionals on the Capitol Police force have their own ideas, I would offer a few simple suggestions. First, have members and staff take their own safety more seriously. They should install car alarms, park only in secure or monitored lots, and quickly check each morning to ensure that no one has opened the vehicle's doors or trunk.

Security procedures on the Hill should be enhanced as well, even if this means a slight delay when entering the building. Cars should be searched more frequently, including inspections of members' vehicles. Sophisticated bomb detection equipment should also be purchased, regardless of the price tag attached.

Finally, staff IDs should become harder to duplicate. If every $20 bill can be redesigned to stop counterfeiters, so should the IDs that allow access to our nation's most important buildings. In addition, they should be unique and verifiable, similar to the electronic key cards used in many private-sector office buildings. Metal detectors and x-ray machines should be installed at all Capitol entrances, not just the ones used by visitors.

Taking these precautions will be a hassle for congressmen and their staffs. But if we don't, the next intruder in the Capitol could be far more dangerous than a lone schizophrenic.

The Washington Monthly

Journalism Award

AUGUST 1998

PETER SELVIN
"In D.C., Many Addicts and Few Services"
The Washington Post

Nearly 75 percent of all criminals in the District of Columbia report current or recent drug use. Yet thanks to a lack of District resources and bureaucratic inefficiency, very few of them receive the treatment they need. As a result, D.C. jails have become warehousing facilities for offenders who have been paroled on the condition that they enter a drug treatment program.

DAVID SHAW
"Scoop: The Rush to Be First"
Two-Part Series
Los Angeles Times

The scoop has long been the lifeblood of working journalists. But getting it first has increasingly become more important than getting it right. Analyzing coverage of the Clinton scandals, Shaw documents the ways in which the growing emphasis on "live and late-breaking" coverage has led to shoddy reporting.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS
"Bitter Medicine"
Vanity Fair

The horror of HMO horror stories never seems to be diminished by the sheer number of them. Hitchens recounts how the story of one determined accident victim in Nevada led to the passage of a pioneering "patient's bill of rights" in that state, and examines the alarming extent to which profit has usurped health as the primary goal of the health care system.

THE MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including two copies of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. Nominations for stories run in September are due October 5.

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Sex, Lies, & Presidents

Clinton's not the first president to shade the truth

BY RICK SHENKMAN

JUST LIKE THE REST OF US, PRESIDENTS DO have secret lives. George Washington, on the eve of marrying Martha, confessed to Sally Fairfax, his best friend's wife, that he was really in love with her. He added: But "the world has no business to know the object of my Love, declared in this manner to you, when I want to conceal it."

Thomas Jefferson also had his secrets. As a young man he attempted to seduce his neighbor's wife, whom he was supposed to be looking after while her husband was away. And, of course, he may have had an affair with black slave Sally Hemings, though the facts remain in dispute.

Andrew Jackson, unwittingly or not, married his wife Rachel while she was still legally married to her previous husband.

Over the course of the first hundred years of our country's history, however, presidents rarely faced questions about their private life. With the exceptions of Jefferson and Jackson, the private lives of presidents largely remained private. But all that changed late in the 19th century with the arrival of the mass media. As newspaper editors discovered the profitable possibilities of gossip—especially gossip about the sex life and health of presidents—the editors published any and all gossip they could find. Gossip sold papers.

Presidents responded to the assault on their privacy in a predictable way: They did everything they could to keep their secrets secret. With the notable exception of bachelor Grover Cleveland, who admitted having an affair with one Maria Halpin, they concealed their past and sometimes even lied about it.

The list of those who concealed a history of sexual misbehavior includes both Democrats and Republicans, well-known Lotharios and strait-laced Presbyterians, among them: James Garfield, Woodrow Wilson, Warren Harding, Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson. All deliberately contrived to leave the false impression with the public that they were good family men who never strayed. But few lied directly about their past; unlike Bill Clinton, none was ever put in the position of having to answer questions about his sex life under oath.

In short, it was simply easier to get away with cheating. In the past even a president's opponents were reluctant to expose their philandering. Wilson, for example, almost certainly cheated on his first wife Ellen Axson while on vacation in Bermuda. Teddy Roosevelt was advised by friends in 1916 to smear Wilson's reputation through an adroit lead to the press, but declined, on practical grounds. "You can't cast a man as a Romeo," he explained, "who looks and acts so much like an apothecary's clerk."

Harding's cheating was legendary. He reportedly had sex just outside his office in the White House with Nan Britton, a young woman who had idolized him since high school and who eventually had a child by him. Once Florence Harding came upon them just as Warren and Nan were in an amorous embrace. A quick-thinking Secret Service agent cleverly blocked the entrance to the room, giving Nan time to flee. To make sure Nan remained quiet, Harding slipped her thousands of dollars, delivered by a compliant Secret Service agent. (Another mistress had been put on a cruise around the world with her husband to keep them away from reporters during the length of the presidential campaign.)

Kennedy, of course, had numerous affairs. Biographer Thomas Reeves accuses the president of putting national security in jeopardy on several occasions in order to be able to keep a date with a mistress. According to Reeves, Kennedy would slip unnoticed by his Secret Service agents into the tunnels beneath

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New York City, eluding even the man who carried the president's nuclear football.

While presidents did not generally find it necessary to lie about their sex life, they often found it essential to lie about their health. Presidents told more lies about their health than about anything else.

The first president to commit this offense was Chester Arthur, who was diagnosed with Bright's disease, a fatal kidney disorder, during his first year in office. Reporters got wind of the news and pressed the president for the truth. Arthur, worried that he would immediately lose his influence if people thought he was dying, boldly denied he was ill. Like his successors, he was concerned that if news got out about his condition he would lose control of the national agenda. All anybody would want to talk about was how he was doing rather than what he hoped to accomplish. Although he was terribly ill during his last year in office and once nearly died, he managed to survive, not finally dying until a year after leaving the presidency.

The next president to lie about his health was Democrat Grover Cleveland, who was well-known for his honesty—even in sexual matters. (As his first presidential campaign was getting under way in 1884, Cleveland, a bachelor, was accused of having fathered an illegitimate child. His advisers told him to "lie like a gentleman" and deny the charge. Instead, Cleveland courageously admitted the child was his, even though the paternity was in doubt: The child's father may well have been Cleveland's former law partner.) Over the July 4th holiday in 1893, amidst a financial panic, Cleveland underwent a secret operation to cut out a small cancerous formation about the size of a quarter that had appeared on the roof of his mouth. To prevent news from leaking out about the operation, the procedure was performed on a yacht steaming up the East River in New York City. Only one government official was told that the president was going under the knife, the secretary of war, who was present during the operation in case Cleveland died, which was altogether likely given that he was vastly overweight and at grave risk of a heart attack or stroke.

A dentist who worked on the president told reporters about the operation a few weeks later, when it appeared to have been a success, but Cleveland preferred to keep the matter secret and ordered spokesmen to deny the story. Because reporters were not yet accustomed to presidents lying, they backed off. In effect, they became part of the White House cover-up. The tale of Cleveland's cancer operation remained secret until 1917, 24 years later, when the lead doctor finally told all in a fascinating story of deception published in the pages of the *Saturday Evening Post.*

The list of presidents who followed the examples of Arthur and Cleveland includes Woodrow Wilson, who concealed the fact that he'd suffered two strokes before becoming president; Franklin Roosevelt, who ran for a fourth term without informing the public that he'd been diagnosed with a life-threatening case of hypertension; Dwight Eisenhower, who hid the news that three years before he ran for president he'd suffered a heart attack so serious he was hospitalized for a month; John Kennedy, who denied having Addison's disease, a debilitating disorder involving the adrenal glands; and Ronald Reagan, who came much closer to dying after he was shot by John Hinckley Jr. than the public at the time was told.

Lying *is* bad. It's particularly bad for presidents to lie. Recent history suggests that when they do—as Lyndon Johnson did in Vietnam and as Richard Nixon did in Watergate—the consequences can be frightful. But is every lie a Vietnam-size lie?

Every generation draws lessons about the world from the events it experiences. The generation that appeased Hitler at Munich concluded that unchecked aggression leads to war. Our generation—particularly the media elites—learned that a lie told by a government official is never just a lie; it is a sign of deep, profound corruption.

But it may be time to rethink the lesson of Vietnam and Watergate as we once had to rethink the lesson of Munich. If we find a man likable and approve of the job he's doing, then perhaps we should overlook his lies. Certainly, it's doubtful we should impeach him. In the current environment that may sound morally bankrupt, but it hasn't always.

In Otto Preminger's classic, "Advise and Consent," Henry Fonda lies about his communist past to a Senate committee holding hearings on his nomination as secretary of state. A righteous Mormon senator from Utah discovers that Fonda has lied and vows to expose him. But he's not the hero in the movie; Fonda is. As the president explains to the senator, we all have things in our past we'd rather lie about. The Mormon senator proceeds to try to destroy Fonda, but ends up destroying himself when it's revealed that *he* had a lie of his own he'd been concealing: During the war, he'd had a homosexual fling. The only one in the movie who doesn't seem to be telling any lies is a reprehensible Southern senator played by Charles Laughton.

In our political movies today, it's the politicians who tell lies who seem reprehensible. But in real life—as in Preminger's movie—that isn't always the case. Sometimes the good guys lie.

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Republicans at the Trough

In the states, as in Washington, Republicans are just as fond of pork as Democrats

BY TYLER BRIDGES

THANKS TO A BOOMING STATE ECONOMY, Florida legislators this year had an extra $2.2 billion and approved their biggest budget ever, $45.3 billion. It was a rare opportunity to meet many pressing needs in a state that ranks near the bottom of per capita spending on education and health care. And indeed, Florida lawmakers used a chunk of the extra revenue to hire new teachers, set aside more endangered land for public use, and expand medical care for uninsured kids. But they also spent as much as $348 million on what in Washington would be called "pork" and what in Tallahassee are known as "turkeys." Among the hundreds of turkeys stuffed in this year's budget: $100,000 to promote the farming of cannonball jellyfish, another $100,000 to buy a trailer to haul catfish for private producers, and $300,000 to wire the outer courts at the Lipton Tennis Center in Key Biscayne to improve television coverage of the pro-tennis tournament held there ever year.

So was this another example of free-spending Democrats? No. In fact, Republicans control Florida's legislature, and what happened in the Sunshine state in 1998 demonstrates that Republicans can be just as liberal in spending taxpayer dollars as Democrats. Narrowly controlling the legislature, Florida's Republican leaders used the budget to reward loyal lawmakers who were pressing to get projects they could bring back home. By doing this, Republicans solidified their power in Tallahassee and throughout Florida. "The budgetary process is the American equivalent of the spoils system," says state Rep. Bill Sublette, a Republican from Orlando who was often critical of how the GOP leadership politicized the budget.

The truth is that Republicans in power—despite all of their anti-spending rhetoric—are just as anxious to spend taxpayers' dollars as are Democrats. Look at what's happening in Washington: Congress just passed a huge, pork-barrel public works bill.

What happens in Tallahassee, Washington, and elsewhere reflects the nature of our political system today, and it's not just the politicians' fault. With their eyes on re-election, pols know they'll be rewarded by their constituents and their campaign contributors if they bring home the bacon—or rather, the turkey. "I could bring $10 billion for the state in education and not get the first thank you," says state Rep. Ken Pruitt, a Republican from Port St. Lucie. "I could bring home $100,000 for a park and have 300 people at the opening." Said state Sen. Donald Sullivan, a Republican from Seminole who chaired the Senate Finance Committee: "My legislators feel like this is how they'll be graded at home—how much pork they bring back." Conversely, legislators who kill turkeys face scorn from their colleagues and often are rendered ineffective within the legislative body. And lawmakers who don't secure enough turkeys for their districts can expect to see their opponents make hay of the issue.

Buying Friends and Influence

To see why Republicans like to spend money as much as Democrats, let's take a closer look at what

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happened in 1998 in the Florida legislature. First, a little history. In Florida's November 1996 elections, Republicans captured the legislature for the first time since Ulysses S. Grant was president. Not surprisingly, they were determined not to let Democrats get back into power. When the 1998 legislative session got underway, Republicans controlled the House, 65-55, and the Senate, 24-16, with elections scheduled for November. In Florida, House members run for re-election every two years, and senators are up every four years.

Just like their colleagues nationally, Republicans had taken control of the Florida legislature with the pledge of lower taxes and less government spending. But as in Washington, they jettisoned their campaign promises by deciding to use the budget to solidify their grip on power. This was particularly true in the Florida House, which had been two years behind the Senate in turning Republican. The Republican House leadership wanted not only to count on the 65 Republicans, but also to snag enough Democrats on important issues to have the 80 votes needed to exercise total control of legislation in the 120-member body.

To build the working super-majority, they went after two groups of Democrats. One group is known as the "Blue Dawgs." They are conservative Democrats, typically from rural parts of the state. Blue Dawgs are always looking for state handouts for roads, sewers, courthouses, prisons, and the like. State Rep. Jamie Westbrook, a Blue Dawg who represents a rural district west of Tallahassee, for example, got $300,000 in taxpayer funds to build a community center in Liberty County. "It's a measure of your strength," Westbrook said. State Rep. Scott Clemons, another Blue Dawg, got $55,000 to allow Gulf Coast Community College, a Panama City-based institution in Clemons' district, to hire someone next year to lobby the legislature to give Gulf Coast more money.

The other group of Democrats that the Republicans courted consisted of the 15 members of the black caucus. Normally, they would be reliable Democrats. But in January 1998, white House Democrats ousted state Rep. Willie Logan from their leadership team because of complaints that he was too liberal and inattentive to his responsibilities. Logan, an African-American from the Miami suburb of Opa-Locka, was in line to be the Democratic House leader after the 1998 elections—until the white Democrats replaced him. Logan and many of his black colleagues immediately declared themselves "free agents," no longer beholden to the Democratic Party.

Republican House Speaker Dan Webster and his chief deputy, Rep. John Thrasher of the Jacksonville suburb of Orange Park, seized on the Logan affair to create an informal alliance with most of the 15 black caucus members. The black members would support Webster and Thrasher on important votes and speak publicly with them during debate. The Republicans in turn would grant the black lawmakers' turkey requests.

So Logan got $5 million for Florida Memorial College, a private black institution in his district, $275,000 to restore a historic theater in Miami, and $90,000 to renovate a train station in Opa-Locka. State Rep. Beryl Roberts-Burke, who chaired the black caucus, got $500,000 for Miami Shores and $300,000 for El Portal, both of which are in her district. In all, the black House lawmakers got at least 53 projects in the budget.

In some cases, Webster and Thrasher gave out turkeys over the complaints of their budget chairmen. State Rep. Sharon Merchant, a Republican from Palm Beach Gardens who chaired the House budget committee that oversaw transportation and economic development projects, initially rejected two of Logan's turkeys: the $275,000 theater renovation and the $90,000 train station repair. She noted that neither project had been discussed or evaluated before her committee. Logan then went to Webster, who overruled Merchant. "It's like they went first to Mommy who turned them down and then they went to Daddy," says Merchant. "The speaker told me he wanted them in the budget so I did. When he gives direction, it gets done." Adam Herbert, chancellor of the Florida state universities system, opposed the $5 million that Logan secured for Florida Memorial College. Herbert didn't think a private college should get so much money when the 10 public institutions he represented are chronically underfunded. Herbert lost out to politics.

Republicans got so out of control this year in putting turkeys into the budget that Sullivan, the Senate Finance chairman, expressed disgust with his colleagues. "A feeding frenzy is a good way to put it," says Sullivan. "The more money available, the greater the feeding frenzy. The pressure to spend all of it is tremendous. And I'm talking about Republicans." One Republican lawmaker from Miami, state Rep. Jorge Rodriguez-Chomat, wanted $25,000 to subsidize a Cuban-American newsletter, for example. A Republican lawmaker from Jacksonville, state Rep. Jim Fuller, wanted $100,000 to train 200 Jacksonville educators in "the leadership skills outlined in Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits for Highly Effective People*." (Neither got

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the money.)

Sullivan complained that lawmakers were pushing projects with little demonstrated need for taxpayers statewide. Many of them did not provide a written explanation of how a project would be a good use of state taxpayer funds, as they are required to do. Instead, Sullivan complained, they whispered in the ear of the Senate president or of one of the Senate budget subcommittee chairmen under him. In a budget filled with thousands of individual items, Sullivan could not keep track of most turkeys.

Of course, Florida isn't the only state where Republicans use pork to maintain their political ties. In New York, where housing, education, and medical care for the poor are perennially underfunded, last spring's budget included $7 million to subsidize horse-race purses, to be distributed at the discretion of the Senate majority leader, Joseph Bruno (R-43rd). Some of the $350 million in "member items" were killed, but many Republican pet projects remained—including Bruno's request for $500,000 to expand the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame in Saratoga Springs. In Republican-controlled Indiana, there's the Build Indiana Fund, home to an endless list of state lawmakers' projects. Rep. Kathy Kraeg Richardson (R-29th), for example, got a $10,000 gazebo for one of her constituent cities, as well as $100,000 towards a river front promenade, according to the *Indianapolis Star*.

"It's outrageous," says one GOP legislator. "Republicans got elected on the premise that there would be less government, less bureaucracy, less taxes. We lied."

In Ohio, state Sen. Karen Gillmor (R-Dublin) slipped over $1 million into the 1996-7 operating budget for a memorial to Rutherford B. Hayes, the little-remembered 19th president of the United States who hailed from Fremont, Ohio, a town in her district. Meanwhile, the General Accounting Office ranked Ohio worst in the nation in school buildings, with a $16.5 billion backlog of badly needed construction. Western Republicans, who pride themselves on their rugged thriftiness, were no better. In Idaho, members of the Republican majority, including House Speaker Mike Simpson (R-2nd), tucked away $1 million in 1995 for the Constitutional Defense Fund, bowing to pressure from militant states' rights groups. The fund, designed to protect Idaho from the federal government, has spent only $200,000 since its inception, largely because its mandate duplicates functions already performed by the state Attorney General's office. According to state Rep. Ken Robinson, a Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, the other $800,000, which could be spent on much-needed school construction, languishes in state coffers.

Spending in the Dark

It's worth noting that there's nothing wrong in theory with lawmakers bringing home projects. Indeed, lawmakers should look out for the needs of their districts. The problem comes, as Florida's state Sen. Donald Sullivan noted, when lawmakers cannot provide evidence of why taxpayers in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and Tampa, for example, should pay for Westbrook's community center in rural Liberty County. Or when lawmakers cannot let projects stand public scrutiny so they slip them into the budget at the end of the process. A project becomes a turkey when lawmakers get them funded because of their political clout or as a political reward from the leadership. The biggest beneficiaries are not taxpayers statewide but the lawmakers' re-election campaigns.

It's also worth noting that Florida's budgetary process is much more open and above-board than most states'. Because of the state's extraordinary public records law and open meetings laws, legislators have to make public any budget requests they file with the budget committees, and much of the budget deliberation takes place in public. In Louisiana, in contrast, many of those documents would not be public—or you would have to wait three days to get them—and the deliberations would take place behind closed doors. In Pennsylvania, Democrats and Republicans hold private party caucuses each day before the session begins to plot strategy and count votes. In Florida, reporters could attend those meetings.

The problem in Florida, however, is that the sheer number of member projects and the skimpy infor-

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mation provided for many makes it difficult for responsible legislators and the press to sort out during the 60-day session which are good and which aren't. Sullivan and Merchant both favor requiring lawmakers to submit all of their requests to a panel of state experts in each field to rank the projects before the legislative session begins. The legislature already requires this with cultural and historic projects that lawmakers want funded. Sullivan and Merchant would like this program extended to all projects put forth by legislators. Lawmakers wouldn't have to blindly follow the experts' recommendations, but a list would provide a baseline from which to go by. Any legislators who wanted funding for their low-ranked projects would have to provide compelling evidence of the projects' need.

The debate over turkeys is not an academic one. While it was prime season for turkeys in Florida this year, lawmakers underfunded or did not fund many valuable programs. Instead of funding $350 million of turkeys, the legislature could have spent that money to give health care to 250,000 of the 500,000 poor children in the state who are still not covered. Or the legislature could have spent $268 million to reduce the student-teacher class size ratio to 20-1 from kindergarten through third grade. Or, as Gov. Lawton Chiles requested, the legislature could have spent $23 million to make schools safer, $4.7 million to hire more workers to treat Alzheimer patients and $10.6 million to expand public health centers in poor areas where many people don't get adequate care. The legislature did not fund these Chiles' requests. Lawmakers, however, did load up on money for parks in their districts.

"Is a park in a community serving a public service?" asks state Rep. Buzz Ritchie of Pensacola, the Democrats' House leader. "Yes, it is. But is it a higher priority than providing basic health care needs to children? Not in my mind."

After the legislature approved the budget, Florida TaxWatch, a respected nonprofit research group, complained that "the number of turkeys in this year's state budget is unprecedented and unbelievable" and called on Chiles to use his veto pen liberally. Indeed, Chiles threatened to line-item numerous projects, but Republicans passed the budget early enough this year that Chiles had to act on his vetoes before the legislature adjourned. Republicans warned him that they would override him on many of the vetoes if he did too many, and Chiles would only end up angering many lawmakers. As a further political calculation, Chiles was especially wary of killing the black lawmakers' turkeys and causing them to support the Republican candidate for governor this year, Jeb Bush, the former president's son. Bush is running against Chiles' lieutenant governor, Buddy MacKay. So in the end, Chiles backed off and did not veto enough projects to raise Republican hackles.

Most Republicans declared victory. State Sen. John Ostalkiewicz, a Republican budget hawk from Orlando, did not. "It's outrageous," says Ostalkiewicz. "We broke our pledge. Republicans got elected on the premise that there would be less government, less bureaucracy, less taxes. We lied."

Research assistance provided by Lydia Polgreen.

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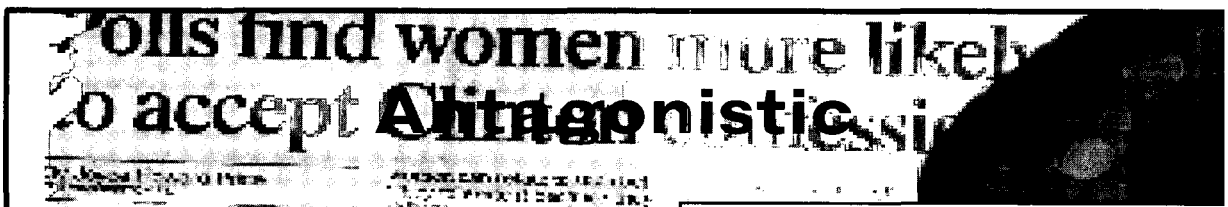
Which Side

Forget the stain-status of the infamous Gap dress, the most intriguing mystery of the Clinton-Lewinsky brouhaha thus far has been the sharp differences in opinion it has wrought among scandal watchers. Some folks think the president is a piggish reprobate who lacks "the moral authority" to lead the nation; others agree that Bill made a foolish, distasteful error in judgment, but don't understand what all the fuss is about. But what exactly drives a person into one camp or the other?



Pious baby boomers. Having grown up during the age of Aquarius, many boomers took advantage of the free-lovin' sexual atmosphere to sow plenty of wild oats before marriage. As such, they now have little understanding of or sympathy for marital infidelity.

Legalists. Breed 1. Those so litigious they would make a crime of the president's legal (albeit idiotic) sexcapades, and his possible attempts to conceal said misbehavior from his wife, his daughter, and the rest of the nation. As Adam Gopnik wrote in a February essay for the *New Yorker*, what the French find most amusing about l'affaire Lewinsky is that Americans consider either charge—the sex or the lying about sex—worthy of legal action: "In America ... as the French see it, every lapse must now have a legal remedy, and the millennium will have arrived only when all social existence has become litigable, and everything wronged—from vegetables to women—has a way to find vindication in a court of law."

Lazy journalists. For 10 months now, droves of reporters, TV chat shows, and even entire networks have been suckling at the teat of The Bill and Monica Show. As such, it's in many journalists' self interest to treat every accusation, allegation, and X-rated rumor about Bimbroglio as a grave matter worthy of serious discussion and dissection. After all, should the Clinton-Lewinsky gravy train end, reporters might actually have to cover stories that require more leg work than camping out on the White House lawn or in front of the D.C. court house.

Non-horny. Those who have never been a prisoner of their hormones cannot be expected to forgive or even fathom a president who has repeatedly risked everything for his.

The hellfire-and-brimstone faithful. Sure, we expected Gary Bauer and the GOP-Christian right to come out blazing, but even traditional Dems and FOBs have cited their religious upbringings as coloring their take on the scandal. A recent *Washington Times* piece linked some pointed public Clinton-bashing to the religion of former White House staffers Leon Panetta, Dee Dee Myers, and George Stephanopoulos, as well as journalists Maureen Dowd, Michael Kelly, Chris Matthews, Mary McGrory, Cokie Roberts, Tim Russert, and Mark Shields. Stephanopoulous is Greek Orthodox; the rest are Catholic.

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Are You On?

Far from a simple case of impeach-the-bastard right-wingers vs. stand-by-your-man Democrats, dividing lines on Zippergate don't necessarily follow party lines. Even moderate, normally like-minded folks have staked out polar-opposite positions on this issue. Ever in search of answers, the Monthly set out to identify some of the major factions within each camp. The result: a decidedly unscientific (yet wildly insightful) breakdown of Clinton antagonists and sympathizers.

Sympathetic

Horny. A subtle bond may have formed between the president and individuals who either now or in their younger days have themselves been obsessed with sexual delights. Even if they never acted on their obsession, folks unable to resist ogling a shapely gam may be less inclined to condemn the president for taking advantage of all the opportunities afforded him. As one sympathetic observer joked, "What's the point of being the ultimate Alpha Male if you can't spread your seed around?"

The old folks. Unlike disapproving boomers, seniors who came of age before the sexual revolution had fewer opportunities to sample life's sexual smorgasbord before tying the knot. Thus, they may better understand the lure of the forbidden fruit.

The fairer sex? There are a couple of possible explanations for surveys showing that women are more understanding of Clinton's peccadillos than their male counterparts. One is political: Women may be more apt to downplay, excuse, or overlook the personal stupidity of a president who has worked to place women in top administration posts and promoted women-friendly policies.

The other explanation is purely personal, and wildly cynical: Women have a radically lower opinion of the male gender than men do. The notion that men—even self-professed liberal, enlightened men—know better than to make a play for a hot babe less than half their age is something far too many women know first-hand to be absurd. (In fact, it might be fun to survey pretty young Hill staffers to see which of our morally outraged congressional leaders have themselves thrown a pass or two.)

Legalists. Breed 2. The term "legally correct" was brought to us by the same folks who gave us such letter-of-the-law side-splitters as "no controlling legal authority."

The "judge not lest ye be judged" faithful. Those who adhere to the "let he who is without sin cast the first stone" philosophy. (And then, of course, there's the esteemed Reverend Jesse Jackson, who has proclaimed our philanderer-in-chief a modern day King David.)

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In the past five years, as Congressional Republicans have mounted sweeping assaults on federal regulatory agencies, we have tried to illustrate the vital work regulations do in protecting our health and safety and in promoting economic growth and fair play. But sometimes regulators go too far, issuing clumsy micromanagement directives that only make things worse. We offer the following article as a warning against such overzealousness, and a reminder that regulation needs to be smarter—not just tougher.

Potty Politics

Doesn't the federal government have anything better to worry about?

BY BEN LIEBERMAN

THE MEDIA HAVE HAD A FIELD DAY poking fun at the federal law mandating low-flow toilets and showers and the current effort to repeal these measures. Newspapers have described the issue as a "controversy swirling around Washington," as Congress "plunges ahead," to respond to constituents who are "flush with anger," over the poor performance of the new water-stingy toilets. Sam Donaldson and Cokie Roberts could barely contain their laughter discussing the subject on their Sunday morning program. Syndicated humorist Dave Barry devoted two articles to the new toilets, trotting out every potty pun in a grade schooler's arsenal. The conservative *Weekly Standard* declared Rep. Joe Knollenberg's (R-Mich.) bill to repeal the mandates to be "the beginning of a great movement." Although low flow showers have not received quite as many gibes as the toilets, they were a running gag in a Seinfeld episode.

No question, low-flow plumbing fixtures are very funny stuff—unless you happen to own one.

Quietly tucked into the text of the massive 1992 Energy Policy Act was the requirement that, by 1994, new toilets sold in the U.S. must use no more than 1.6 gallons per flush (gpf), well below the 3.5 gpf of most existing models. New showerheads were limited to a flow of 2.5 gallons per minute (gpm), also a sharp drop from what consumers had come to expect. These water conservation measures, added to the bill largely through the efforts of a few environmental activists working with a sympathetic Congressman, generated little debate at the time. When the bill was signed into law by President Bush, the public had no idea what Washington had done to them.

Since 1994, however, millions of Americans, perhaps after moving into a new house or remodeling a bathroom, have had their first experience with low-flow toilets or showers. The response has grown into an unlikely grassroots backlash.

In addition to costing more than the old versions, the new toilets do not work as well. The smaller and shallower water patch means increased odors and more frequent cleaning. Some models clog more often. Many say they have to flush more than once to clear the bowl completely, which, in addition to being annoying and unpleasant, undercuts the conservation purpose behind the law.

The complaints are by no means isolated. "These problems are very widespread," says Glenn Haege, host of the syndicated radio program "Ask the Handyman."

The timid dribble of a 2.5 gpm shower has proven equally unpopular. One operator of a new motel (where many guests get their introduction to low-flow

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showers) received so many complaints about the showers that he actually posted in each room an article explaining the law, so guests would stop blaming the management.

Some consumers, now aware of the problems, have gone to great lengths to get the old style toilets and showers. A black market in the remaining supply of 3.5 gpf toilets has purportedly sprung up. Canadian plumbing supply houses near the U.S. border, where 3.5 gpf models are still legal, report increased sales. On one plumbing advice website, plumbers and remodelers trade tips with homeowners on which low-flow showerhead models are easiest to "modify." But most people are stuck with the low-flow fixtures, whether they like them or not.

Early last year, Knollenberg introduced H.R. 859, the Plumbing Standards Improvement Act of 1997, which would repeal the low-flow mandate. The bill has generated substantial public support. "The mail has just been tremendous," says Craig Albright, a legislative assistant to Knollenberg. Most complain about the performance of the new toilets, and about a government that would do such a thing to them. For example, Bill Lynn of Davenport, Iowa, said his new toilets "clog easily, and I find that I sometimes must flush them five or six times," and that "this is just another case of government intrusion, and we have plenty of that." A few have also come to realize that the law's means for conserving water may be a bit misdirected. "It is especially frustrating when I'm plunging my toilet for the third time in one day, to gaze out my window and see my neighbor's sprinkling system," noted Kurt Topel of Riverwoods, Ill. The congressman has promised to hold a hearing after the fall elections.

Unfortunately, the special interest clout is allied against the bill, and in favor of the status quo. The plumbing manufacturers are making out very nicely—after all, people still need toilets, only now they are more expensive. Likewise, groups representing local water and wastewater utilities prefer the low-flow mandate over other conservation programs because it shifts the costs to consumers and the political heat to Washington.

Against these powerful and well connected forces are the diffuse and poorly represented interests of angry toilet and shower owners. Even strong consumer backlashes often fail to coalesce into legislation, and H.R. 859, which currently has 75 co-sponsors, will have a difficult fight in the 106th Congress.

Some of the newer 1.6 gpf toilets are better than the earliest ones, and in fact Dave Barry's second article highlights one such model, though he still thinks the law is dumb. But even the improved 1.6 gpf toilets are not as good as the 3.5 gpf models, and the best of them cost considerably more. Nonetheless, manufacturers and activists now proclaim the problems to be solved. In response to an industry sponsored study purporting to show high consumer satisfaction with low-flow toilets, Natural Resources Defense Council policy analyst Ronnie Cohen proclaims that the new low-flow models are "better than the old toilets." Despite such boasts, low-flow proponents adamantly oppose a return to a competitive market.

Whether today's parsimonious potties are as good as yesterday's commodious commodes is not the issue. The real question is who should decide such things, individual consumers or the federal government. Unless there is truly a serious national problem to be addressed, it ought to be the former. And it is here that the low-flow argument also fails. Conservation advocates keep telling us that there is a national water shortage, but they apparently forgot to tell the water. It insists on staying cheap and plentiful throughout most of the country. If it didn't, low-flow toilets and showers, which were around before the mandate, would likely have caught on without government help.

If there is a water problem at all, it is an entirely localized one. Some water and wastewater treatment facilities are bumping up against capacity, and conservation measures could forestall the need for costly expansion. But this can best be dealt with at the level of government where the problem exists.

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The Good Citizen

How our ideals of citizenship are changing

By Nicholas Lemann

THE GOOD CITIZEN: A History of American Civic Life
By Michael Schudson
The Free Press, $27.50

THERE'S A CORNER OF THE political world, which includes the kind of elected official who is praised for being "thoughtful," the foundation/think tank complex, prominent public intellectuals, and the high-end print press, that, for all its self-conscious depth and seriousness, operates on a series of unexamined assumptions about American public life. The most pervasive and least acknowledged of these is an automatic nostalgia, an idea of the present as a falling-away from a better past. We aren't as politically committed as in the '60s or as socially calm as in the '50s or as organized as in the '30s or as truth-seeking as in the Progressive Era.

At the moment, civic life is the main focus of the nostalgia of the better sort. The original bringer of the Word on the subject was Alexis de Tocqueville, who praised American society above all for its proliferation of voluntary associations. Today, matters ranging from declining voter turnout and newspaper readership to urban ghetto poverty to the rise of television and suburbia to the triumph of entertainment values over news are understood as examples of civic failure. Hardly a day goes by that my mail doesn't bring an announcement of a new study on civic renewal. The single best-known bemoaning of the sorry decline of American civic life since a halcyon baseline period, Robert Putnam's famous article "Bowling Alone," will soon be published as a book, and then the rhetoric of civic nostalgia will only intensify.

Michael Schudson's *The Good Citizen* is an admirable, consistently interesting attempt to lay out with some factual and conceptual precision the history of an issue usually discussed in platitudes. Like Robert Wiebe's underrated 1994 book *Self-Rule*, it helps to clarify terms like "democracy" and "citizenship," which lose all their meaning if they're used merely to signify something vague and unobjectionable.

Most of *The Good Citizen* is given over to an amiable but determinedly revisionist history. The oft-invoked founding fathers, Schudson says, had an idea of democracy that would be unrecognizable today. Features of the contemporary political system that we take for granted, like universal suffrage, direct election of candidates by secret ballot, equal opportunity, classlessness, political parties, and a free press, were completely foreign (or, if not foreign, horrifying) to them. To cite specifically just one of many possible examples of Schudson's merry contrariness, he argues, convincingly, that the First Amendment to the Constitution barred Congress from curtailing freedom of the press only in order to leave room for the state legislatures to curtail it—which is why editors were regularly jailed for seditious libel.

It wasn't until well into the 19th century that anything like democracy and civil society in their current forms existed. That the two sprang up simultaneously wasn't an accident; they were linked. To an extent we don't appreciate today, Schudson says, civil institutions did not stand magnificently apart from politics and government. Either they were explicitly political and partisan, like the 19th-century press, or the various interest and pressure groups that gradually joined and morphed into the modern parties (such as the anti-slavery societies that became the base of the Republican Party); or (as in the case of temperance societies) they were an attempt to reestablish elite control in reaction to the unruly newness of democracy.

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When we finally arrived at the point of having a well-organized party system and high voter turnout, after the Civil War, the character of American politics, Schudson reminds us, was overwhelmingly that of an unlovely battle over money, jobs, and power, with little or no public-interest component. High-minded, educated people hated politics and fought to limit its power and purview, through means like the establishment of the civil service. The basic set of civic ideals we hold now—good government, an objective, reformist press, a powerful, benevolent president, and an idealistically engaged citizenry—originated with patrician reformers who thought of them as antidotes to pure party democracy.

Schudson understands American civic history as an endless, seesawing struggle between two forces that we no longer think of as being in conflict: on the one hand mass engagement in politics and public affairs, and on the other what he calls "state mugwumpery," that is, supposedly honest, efficient, depoliticized government in which experts have disproportionate influence. The first of these forces was triumphant in the late 19th century. The second has been triumphant in this century, and that (rather than disgust over official lying and corruption) is why the public is so apathetic and cynical about politics. If government is depoliticized, then politics matters less, and it's only natural that most people will therefore become less interested and involved in it. The rise of special-interest groups had been another direct result of the deliberate wing-clipping of political parties and the spoils system. The parties have to court the likes of the American Association of Retired People because its members aren't primarily loyal to the parties. Why should they be? Control of the government benefits they want have been taken out of the parties' hands.

As for Robert Putnam's idea that outside of the sphere of politics there used to be a vigorous associational life for ordinary people that has recently disappeared, Schudson seems extremely skeptical about that, too. He sees Putnam's high-civic-engagement period of the fifties as a Cold War aberration—one more object of useless nostalgia. And he reminds us that during what Putnam considers the heyday of American civic life, the Putnams of the era—intellectuals like David Riesman and C. Wright Mills—were in a state of despair over the condition of our civil society (on the grounds that we had become timid conformists) that was no less severe than Putnam's.

Just about the only element of the conventional wisdom about American society that Schudson agrees with is the idea that the "rights revolution" of the '50s, '60s, and '70s, during which judges and legislators made government the guarantor of a wide range of personal freedoms, profoundly changed our political and civic life. The essence of the rights revolution is encouraging citizens to seek specific redress on issues of paramount importance to them—everything from racial advancement to feminism to medical benefits to handicapped access to child abuse prevention—rather than interacting with the wider society primarily through a broad-spectrum organization like a political party. While granting that an emphasis on individual rights weakens traditional politics, Schudson is nonetheless a mild defender of the rights revolution. [C]ivic participation now takes place everywhere," he writes. "It exists in the microprocesses of social life. . . .[T]he idea of citizenship has colonized . . . many of the territories of private life that were once beyond its jurisdiction. Citizens still exercise citizenship as they stand in line at their polling places, but now they exercise citizenship in many other locations. . . . [T]hey are citizens in their homes, schools, and places of employment."

Schudson ends by arguing, hastily and incompletely, that American life has gotten so complicated that perhaps we should give up on the goal of everyone's being politically engaged, and instead honor "the monitorial citizen" who swings into public action only when directly threatened. This isn't very satisfying; if Schudson is unusually successful at keeping his work free of what he calls "the rhetoric of decline," he has done less well at avoiding the other most common fault of intellectuals, presenting a recommendation that is much weaker than the analysis that has led up to it. You get the feeling he's kind of a hypocrite-in-reverse. As Jamie Stiehm demonstrated in a mischievous piece in *The Nation* a few years ago, most of the familiar hand-wringers over the sorry state of American citizenship don't themselves do any of the things (PTA membership, church attendance, even voting) that they demand of everybody else. Schudson, on the other hand, tells us that in 1996 he was a volunteer inspector in his home precinct. He admiringly mentions the lifelong devotion to public service of his brother, a judge in Wisconsin. He seems reluctant to preach what he himself practices, perhaps because he so badly wants to avoid the role of the stuffed shirt who excoriates ordinary people for their insufficiencies.

Never mind. *The Good Citizen* is an extremely valuable book. What it does best is insist on precision about a subject that is commented on constantly in a fuzzy, second-rate way. There isn't, Schudson insists, a single version of "good citizenship" that used to predominate in America and doesn't any longer. The longed-for

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good citizen of contemporary discourse is an ordinary person who faithfully votes and stays informed about public affairs, who is intensely involved as a community volunteer, and who wants government to be clean, efficient, and dedicated to the overall public good. Well, Schudson says, that kind of good citizen, as the typical actor in American public life, has never existed.

Up to at least 1830 the typical American probably did none of the things now thought to represent good citizenship. As a mythic figure, today's good citizen represents an unacknowledged blending of three quite distinctly different ways for the individual to interact with society. One is the interest-citizen, who actively engages in politics in the hope of gaining personal advantage—the prime example being the vanished urban machine Democrat. A second is the information-citizen, who wants government policy to rest on a bed of truth and expertise—the Progressive mugwump type. And the third is the rights-citizen, who relies primarily on laws rather than elections as the way to extract the most cherished goals from the political system—the crusader against sexual harassment, say.

Through our history, these versions of the meaning of citizenship have been in conflict; it isn't too much to say that each has consistently tried to blast the others out of existence. To understand this doesn't necessarily mean we now have to pick one version and reject the other two. It does mean that one shouldn't be able to get away with presenting oneself as blandly mystified over why Americans don't behave themselves perfectly, the way they used to—which is a precondition of getting to work on the problem of citizenship.

Let's try to move the discussion a little further than Schudson is willing to, but on the basis of his invaluable evidence. People become active citizens because they perceive it as likely to produce results for them. If you construct society so that the only reason to become an active citizen is that it's the right thing to do, then most people won't be active citizens. The way to encourage citizenship is to endow it with practical and psychological consequences. The more decisions seem to be in the hands of faraway experts, the more voters are treated as sheep who must meekly respond to the manipulations of public opinion experts, the deeper the slumber of the citizenry will become.

We tend to fall automatically into thinking that if people don't vote or otherwise engage themselves in public affairs, it's because they've become disgusted with politics. If we could only eliminate the money and the spoils and the hubbub and create a politics based on calm reason, they'd come back. Schudson convinces us that every step in that direction will only deepen the problem. Citizenship, it turns out, is fundamentally political. The best way to promote it is to make politics as broad, open, and consequential as possible. ●

The Limits of the Law

Arthur Liman's career sheds light on scandals from Iran-Contra to Monicagate

By James Fallows

LAWYER
By Arthur Liman
Public Affairs Press, $30

ARTHUR LIMAN SAYS THAT A major purpose of his memoir is to give a realistic picture of a lawyer's working life. The book doesn't exactly do this. Liman's career, as a confidant of major business moguls interrupted by forays into public service, seems too narrowly representative to say much about the law. His approach as a narrator is to spend more time on the characters, issues, and consequences of the big cases he portrays than on the details of what he himself did. This is a refreshing change from many other lawyer-centric accounts but also diminishes its slice-of-life value. Still, *Lawyer* is a valuable, revealing, and well-timed book. Apart from being skillfully written and funny at many points, nearly everything in the book bears on the tension between

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what is "legal" and what is "right." This difference, in turn, explains much of what people don't like about lawyers—and how to think about those embattled lawyers of the moment, Bill Clinton and Kenneth Starr.

Liman, who died of cancer last year in his mid-60s, began writing up notes of his career only when he knew he was terminally ill. The task was nearly finished by the time he died. Not until then did his family and editors discover his diaries from the event that brought him his greatest public prominence: his role as lead counsel in the Iran-Contra hearings a decade ago.

As one of the few adult Americans to have missed that spectacle (I was out of the country the whole time), I share none of the collective memory of how Liman looked on TV matched up against Oliver North, John Poindexter, or Fawn Hall. The Liman who comes across in the book is a wisecracking but not at all nasty character, proud always to have been the smartest kid in class but also proud to show pictures of himself fishing with tycoon pals like Steve Ross or Charles Bludhorn. He says that his childhood—dressmaker's son on Long Island, grandson of Russian Jewish immigrants, off to Harvard College, first in his class at Yale Law School—left him with a view of the professions as the way to do good and do well. To grow up as a Jew in the '30s and '40s, he says, was to figure out that due process and civil liberties really could mean the difference between life and death. His commitment to the noble side of the law was fortified when he was an undergraduate at Harvard, during the McCarthy era. Sen. Joe McCarthy and his henchman, Roy Cohn, came to Cambridge to badger a professor who admitted to having been a communist but would not name any others on the faculty. McCarthy was terrible, Liman writes, but:

> Cohn to me was even worse. Short and short-tempered, sullen in manner, brutal in speech, Cohn had a cruel streak. Worse, still, he reminded me in some ways of myself—I too was young, smart, and a Jew—and these similarities bothered me more than I can say. How could a Jew, a man trained in the law, himself the son of a respected judge, ally himself with a rabble-rousing demagogue spouting intolerance and hate?

More than 40 years later, after Cohn had been disbarred and was about to die of AIDS, Liman ran into him in New York and told him, "You know, Roy, it was because of you that I became a lawyer."

> Arrogant as always, Cohn was delighted. He took it as a compliment, a way of praising his skill in the courtroom. It was unimaginable to him that I might loathe his brutal tactics, his dishonesty, his contempt for fairness, and above all else his amorality.

If disgust for amorality really is why Liman became a lawyer, he had better offer a moral vision of the law. This he does—sort of. The strongest impression I took from the book concerns the constraints that modern legal structure places on people even as well-meaning as Liman seems to have been.

One constraint is the skewing of career choices. Out of law school, Liman went to the New York firm of Paul, Weiss—one of the few, he says, that in the 1950s tried to attract both Jewish and Gentile lawyers. The dominant figure there was Simon Rifkind, a New Dealer and former judge who was a gifted courtroom advocate and had become the rainmaker for the firm. Liman learned corporate law and courtroom technique from him—but after three years, at the start of the Kennedy administration, felt the "lure of public service" and joined Robert Morgenthau's staff as a federal prosecutor in New York City. There his specialty was prosecuting stock fraud—a nice touch in view of his later role as Michael Milken's lawyer.

> "That time, we had Cabinet members and the president's National Security Adviser, and probably the president himself, deliberately misleading Congress and the public about important matters of state."

Liman's account makes clear that his time with Morgenthau was among the "happiest and proudest" periods of his life. But after three years, and despite Morgenthau's strenuous efforts to hold onto him, it was back to Paul, Weiss. Liman says that he had to think for a moment before making the change: "How would I adapt to being an advocate for an individual's or a corporation's cause?... In the U.S. Attorney's office, I would never have to prosecute a case I didn't believe in." But in the least introspective-seeming lines of the book, he brushes off such doubts by say-

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ing, in effect, that to do good later on he would have to do well now: "I expected that I would leave again at some point to do public service, but when I did I wanted the independence that would come from having established a social private practice."

"Independence" is a wonderful word to have chosen. Here it means simply "money." In its broader sense, including the freedom to pursue only cases he believed in, it represents what's lost in the corporate life. The tension between these two kinds of independence is not new. But this life story—in which Liman recounts with obvious joy his episodes of public service, and then with more focused, debating-trick pride talks about the shrewd deals he crafted for CEOs—emphasizes that the tradeoff is more acute in law than in most other fields.

This leads to a related twist, which is the compartmentalization of the "moral" element in legal work. Clearly Liman (who I should probably say again comes across as personally charming in the book) is proud of Paul, Weiss' pro bono work for environmentalists and so forth. He is even prouder of his sabbaticals in public service—apart from Iran-Contra, the most important was on a commission investigating the uprising at the Attica state prison in 1971. He also helped New York City recover damages for defective subway cars, looked into alleged misconduct by New York's medical examiner, and was a generous donor.

But for the firm, and even for Liman, these good works seem like tithing. That is, they are well-intentioned and helpful efforts notable for how different they are from day-in day-out concerns. The lessons Liman draws from his public service are high-minded, if at times caricature liberal. "Personally, the Attica investigation was searing, unsettling, and unforgettable. I had encountered anti-Semitism in my time, and I'd read about racism, but Attica made me feel in my gut the racism that was tearing out the soul of America." But they are confined to their own chapters in the book, and to specific episodes in Liman's career, rather than seeming to be integrated into his main work. Liman says "I was never the same after Attica." But he quickly notes that he went right back to Paul, Weiss—and a little while later, with nearly equal pathos, he is describing the ordeal that Michael Milken and his Drexel associates endured. The government's "campaign of intimidation left Drexel employees, and finally Drexel itself, literally terrified. ... I'm sure many Drexel executives had no idea whether they'd broken the law or not. What they did know was that they were living a nightmare—fabulously wealthy one moment and, because of RICO's [the Racketeering-Influenced and Corrupt Organizations] confiscatory provisions, potentially broke the next."

"Compartmentalization" naturally leads us back to current politics. The main news in Liman's book helps explain the common theme in objectionable behavior by the otherwise antithetical Bill Clinton and Kenneth Starr. From Liman's vivid account of the Iran-Contra investigations, two points stand out. One is how much more serious and widespread the lying was then. (This time, we have a president shamelessly deceiving Cabinet members, staff, and the public about a personal matter. That time, we had Cabinet members and the president's National Security Adviser, and probably the president himself, deliberately misleading Congress and the public about important matters of state.) The contrast is stark enough that Liman's chapters on Iran-Contra should somehow be sneaked into the Monicagate record, perhaps as an annex to Starr's report. The other striking impression is how "non-compartmentalized" was the political approach of the Iran-Contra committee. The resolute stonewalling of John Poindexter—Reagan's national security adviser, who presented himself as the "buck stops here" originator of the Iran-Contra plan—gave Ronald Reagan the sort of alibi that Bill Clinton obviously lacks. But Liman shows that Congress stopped pushing after it had revealed the existence of the plan. Doing more—including pushing for impeachment of Reagan—might have been legally defensible but would have been politically destructive in the largest sense. They acted, he says, in keeping with Sen. Daniel Inouye's "warning that the country can afford to remove a president if there is convincing proof of an impeachable offense, but it cannot afford to incapacitate a president by a drawn-out investigation of his legitimacy."

Liman says that Lawrence Walsh, the Kenneth Starr of that era, was by contrast determined "to pursue criminal charges by every possible theory." He regarded the congressional caution as so much pussyfooting. Instead he dragged his investigation on for years—with the result mainly of embittering Republicans who prepared for revenge in the form of Starr. Walsh was a prosecutor determined to get indictments no matter what. Clinton is a lawyer willing to use "legally accurate" but obviously deceptive alibis. Starr is an inquisitor willing to dump out all the dirty details he has found. Maybe some college student will react to this spectacle as Arthur Liman did to Roy Cohn, and try to become a different kind of lawyer, or politician.

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Worlds Apart

At the heart of our racial problems is the failure of integration

By Robert Worth

SOMEONE ELSE'S HOUSE:
America's Unfinished Struggle for Integration
By Tamar Jacoby
Free Press, $30

A CENTURY AGO, THE BLACK writer Charles Chesnutt predicted confidently that in 100 years there would be no more "race problem," because blacks would intermarry with whites and disappear as a separate race.

So much for prophecy. Black-white marriage rates are still only one-fifth as high here as in Britain, and they are far lower than intermarriage rates between whites and other racial groups. It may have been naive to expect blacks and whites to turn lovey-dovey after such a long and bitter history. But nowadays they often seem to be actively retreating from the ideal of integration that Martin Luther King conjured up so eloquently 35 years ago. Civil rights groups are for "integrating the money," as former Atlanta mayor Andrew Young once put it, and less and less interested in bringing blacks and whites together. Race-baiting extremists like Louis Farrakhan may not speak for the majority of blacks, but they draw on a broad groundswell of separatist feeling. "It's a black thing, you wouldn't understand," reads a popular T-shirt slogan. Many whites return the gesture—either because they're fed up with what they perceive as black hostility, or because they embrace the kind of liberalism that welcomes such hostility as deserved or racially "authentic."

This state of mutual aloofness is the target of Tamar Jacoby's book, *Someone Else's House: America's Unfinished Struggle for Integration*. She sees both blacks and whites abandoning "the hopeful consensus that formed around King's vision of a single, shared community." This growing separatism, she argues, is an acid in the fabric of American community, encouraging distrust and preventing constructive debate about issues like affirmative action and the ghetto.

Jacoby, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute as well as a veteran journalist, makes no apologies for her own opinions. She is against preferences and set-asides for minorities, and she comes down hard on black political leaders for failing to explore more constructive solutions. It's no accident that she has a note tacked over her desk (as she tells us in the introduction) reading, "If you can't call a black thug a thug, you're a racist." She's equally tough on those white liberals who, as she sees it, encouraged the worst elements in black leadership and opinion. "Far more damaging today than the old bigotry," Jacoby writes, "is the condescension of well-meaning whites who think that they are advancing race relations by encouraging alienation and identity politics." In some respects, this book is a polemic against the prevailing liberal consensus on race. Yet it's also an inspiring reminder of all that was best in the struggle for integration and a call for us to take it up again.

Jacoby's first and longest chapter, on New York City in the 1960s, is her vehicle for an extended attack on the liberal approach to racial conflict. The story begins in 1964, when the peaceful protests of the civil rights movement began to turn nasty, culminating in a full-scale riot in mid-July. Liberal whites were understandably baffled and frightened. It had only been two weeks since the passage of the landmark civil rights act, yet many blacks in the movement had already soured on the ideal of integration, tempted away by more defiant leaders like Malcolm X. Most middle-class whites, and many blacks, saw the New York riots as just that: young men giving free rein to their worst impulses. But to John Lindsay, the liberal patrician who won the mayoral election in the fall of 1965, the riots were "a rational response to particular ghetto conditions," as Jacoby puts it. This was Lindsay's great mistake. By elevating the riots into a form of political insurrection, Lindsay tacitly encouraged them.

To her credit, Jacoby doesn't simply deride Lindsay for his errors. Instead, she makes us feel his courage and steadfastness in the midst of a deepening national crisis. Desperate to prevent more violence, Lindsay went on frequent "ghetto walks" in the worst parts of Harlem, Brooklyn, and the South Bronx, often virtually unaccompanied, and at the worst possible times (such as right after Martin Luther King was assassi-

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nated). This populist approach may well have made a difference; unlike other cities, New York did not suffer any major riots during Lindsay's tenure as mayor. Largely for that reason, he was nominated to the Kerner Commission in 1967, and became the dominant force behind the commission's influential report on race relations, released the following spring.

Yet Jacoby argues convincingly that Lindsay's short-term victories came at a terrible price. His analysis of the riots, which became the centerpiece of the Kerner report, echoed the self-serving rationales of militants who claimed ghetto violence was a legitimate and just rebellion against white authority. Lindsay thus "signaled to young blacks that they were right to blame their frustrations on white society," Jacoby writes, "and that there was no meaningful distinction between generalized racial rage and focused, constructive political demands."

Jacoby's second chapter, on Detroit, is focused mainly on failures of black leadership. Detroit had a long history of open racial conflict even before the National Guard's tanks rolled in to quell the riots raging through the city in the summer of 1967. In the next few years racial tensions only got worse, as rising crime rates pushed whites out of the city and forced busing led to a backlash led by middle-class parents. By the time Coleman Young became the city's first black mayor in 1974, he knew the city's salvation lay in a truce that would retain its rapidly fleeing white businesses. Yet he slashed the already demoralized police department until the city became a virtually lawless zone, where roving gangs of teenagers raped and murdered with impunity. White flight accelerated, and Young's hopeful efforts to revitalize Detroit's downtown languished. By the early 1980s a bumper sticker appeared: "Will the last one who leaves please turn out the lights."

Of course, Young wasn't entirely to blame. As in New York, the white business community inadvertently radicalized the city's blacks by funding violent extremists, in a misguided effort to prevent more rioting. By the time Young became mayor, baiting whites may have been a matter of political survival. In fact, Jacoby concedes that in Detroit and elsewhere, part of the problem was that "gradualist leaders were in short supply, and they had little credibility with the impatient black public." This awareness helps to prevent Jacoby's book from becoming another scolding tirade against liberalism, and it gives her narrative an atmosphere of tragic inevitability.

The third and final section, on Atlanta, addresses that city's elaborate affirmative action and racial set-aside programs. An island of relative peace and prosperity, Atlanta did not become bitterly polarized as New York and Detroit did during the '60s. The challenge for black mayors Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young was to bring more blacks into the city's swelling economic mainstream. They did so by establishing a variety of racial preferences and set-asides in the construction and management of the city's new airport, commuter rail system, and "Underground" shopping mall during the '70s and '80s.

In practice, the programs didn't work so well. Many white firms won contracts with a nominal black CEO who went along for a fee—the so-called "rent-a-skin" scheme. Most of the program's "joint ventures" involved white firms doing the job alone and handing a check to their black partners. When scandals like these came to light, Jackson and Young retorted that they weren't the whole story, and that the programs had boosted the city's black business class. But most of these businesses folded quickly, because the program had failed to provide them with the experience and training they needed. The only real black beneficiaries were a handful of black firms who would have succeeded anyway.

Jacoby also argues that Atlanta's affirmative action programs "mock[ed] the dignity of the blacks involved" by forcing them to compete out of their depth and making them look lazy and incompetent. The result was more racial division and mistrust, not less. Yet she admits grudgingly that the programs were and are very popular among blacks, and even among the city's white business elite. For blacks, the programs served a powerful symbolic purpose, even for those who didn't benefit from them. For whites, the answer is more cynical. As one white developer put it, "It was the price of racial peace." Jacoby seems reluctant to admit it, but the developer may have been right. Clumsy and divisive as they were, Atlanta's programs were probably far better than nothing at all.

Which isn't to say they couldn't be improved. The trouble with most affirmative action programs is that they focus on symbolic inclusion rather than the hard, unglamorous, and time-consuming work of bringing disadvantaged blacks into the mainstream. As Jacoby puts it: "Vastly improved public schooling, some form of school choice or vouchers, more money for community colleges, need-based scholarships and remedial tutoring, job-training programs, apprenticeships, outreach and mentoring networks: This is only the beginning of the long, hard assault that is necessary to develop black capacities in a way that will truly level the playing field." The only serious flaw in her prescription is a concession to the current skepticism about federal involvement, which, she says, "works best at the margins." She does

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acknowledge that "the old idea of government-mandated mingling" has been one of the great routes to integration—as for instance, in the volunteer career-track army. But a few suggestions on how to renew this crucial federal role would have made this book a far more useful addition to the current debate on race.

Still, *Someone Else's House* is a powerful reminder of what went wrong in the struggle for racial equality, and an inspiring call to put it right. It will draw fire from those who believe a white woman must not speak openly about the flaws of black culture or leadership. But it's refreshing to see someone flout this liberal shibboleth, and it's impossible to question the civic spirit with which she does it.

Red Army Blues

The untold story of the Russian Army's disintegration

By Ralph Peters

THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET MILITARY
By William E. Odom
Yale University Press, $35.00

The Collapse of the Soviet Military is a marvelous tombstone of a book. Set over the grave not only of the Soviet military, but of the Soviet empire, it is about much more than missiles and tanks. Here, the failure of a system of government is examined through a military prism, and it is high drama.

This is an unexpectedly interesting and readable book, not least because the author, William E. Odom, is a former general who headed Army intelligence and then directed the National Security Agency. He now keeps a desk at the Hudson Institute. Each of these jobs should have prevented him from writing such an incisive, vital book: Generals, terrified of false steps, do not say anything of interest; NSA believes that anything not highly classified is worthless; and it is a code among think tanks, right or left, that originality of thought and lucidity of language are for amateurs. A career Russia specialist, Odom has risen above his environment to crown his career with a book that is true in detail, clear in expression—and worthwhile.

The Soviet Union was a state based upon economic theory in which no one understood economics. Its early successes were based upon the clarity of its needs, upon bullying, and upon a willingness to waste massively in order to achieve demonstrably. Initially, with Russia and its ravaged conquests stripped to the bone by war and civil war, it did not require sophisticated analysis to determine the new state's needs—it needed everything. Massive projects lent themselves to multi-year planning. In the 1930s, the U.S.S.R. looked pretty impressive to the outsider who was not too inquisitive, and even during our Eisenhower years, with the United States undertaking the greatest planned infrastructure project in our history, the Soviet Union appeared dangerously competitive.

It was not. The U.S.S.R. was a blacksmith shop that built satellites. During the "years of stagnation" under Leonid Brezhnev, the relentless cancer within the Soviet system was its military-industrial bloc. There were some similarities to the U.S. military system—a uniformed leadership often out of touch with strategic reality, and an industrial lobby able to force unneeded and even unwanted weapons upon the military (with the support of co-opted men and agencies within the government). But the differences were more profound. Throughout the Brezhnev years, the Soviet military received a wildly disproportionate share of the state's resources. (As Odom makes clear, it remains impossible to measure exactly how much because the military-industrial cancer had spread so pervasively.) Moscow's military, pledged to defend the Motherland, ended by consuming so much of the state's wealth that it destroyed the system, the economy, and the last social integrity.

The Russian generals resembled their political masters in their conviction—and such it was—that theory ruled the world. One of the many services rendered by Odom's book is its cool insistence on the importance

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of Marxist-Leninist analysis to the Soviet view of international events. We mirror image and declare, "They didn't really believe that crap—it was all lip service." But, as Odom convincingly demonstrates, it was not. Those old men did believe in the dialectic and in an inevitable victory. Even Gorbachev sought to renovate, to rejuvenate—but not to fundamentally change the system. His tragedy, if such it was, was that he recognized only the symptoms of decay and missed the causes. He and his fellow reformers unleashed demons beyond their control, and the history of the last years of the U.S.S.R. is one of bewildered men rushing to keep up with events that constantly outpaced them.

Odom is hard on Mikhail Gorbachev. He sees him as a limited man, an irredeemable bureaucrat. So much is true. But even the small reforms with which Gorbachev began—and which he hoped would suffice—required courage and great skill at infighting. It need not amaze us that Gorbachev could not see into the future, or that he did not comprehend the full sickness of the Soviet system, or that he failed in his own designs (which appear modest, in retrospect). What should amaze us for decades to come is that Gorbachev—a vain but blessedly rational man—avoided a cataclysm as one of the world's great empires raced to self-destruction. Odom's weakness in this regard is his failure to accept that history, in most cases, is not made by towering heroes, but by the men and women who just happen to be there. We were lucky to have Gorbachev, a capable and industrious bureaucrat, at the top of the Soviet heap in those dangerous years.

And it seems unfair to ridicule the Russians for their inability to grasp and cope with the pace of change in the late '80s. It was no easier for us. In the latter half of 1985, shortly after Gorbachev had come to power, I was an officer-student at the Army's Intelligence Center and School. A pundit who now dines out on his prescience came to Arizona and informed us that Gorbachev was no different from his predecessors, except that he was better dressed. Lacking suitable humility, another officer and I argued with the voice of Washington—instinctively, we sensed that a real change had arrived with Gorbachev. The speaker slapped us down, with all the viciousness of the sedentary man empowered.

The spirit of that "expert" lives on. Well into the 90s leading analysts resisted acknowledging the stunning decline—indeed, the decomposition—of the Soviet military. During the Russian Federation's Chechen bloodbath, Defense Intelligence Agency analysts insisted, against all evidence, that the Russian military could not be that inept, that they had to be sending in the B team (in fact, Moscow deployed the best it had). In 1998, Washington intelligence officers and defense contractors still insist that Russia is on the comeback trail. We might as well expect a resurgence of the Hittite Empire in our lifetimes.

But what were the mechanics of breakdown below the macro-economic explanations? Corruption was the key, and Odom describes it in a controlled voice that is far more effective than burning prose would have been. He catalogs folly and consequent suffering. At the troop-unit level, shady deals, from black marketing of military fuel to local commanders renting out soldiers for factory or farm work, had become the norm. At the upper echelons, the generals lolled in perks, rejecting any analysis that did not conform to their prejudgments and prejudices (one more similarity to our own flag officers). Officers at all levels grew remote from the troops. Barracks life became savage and even deadly—while the higher-ups drugged themselves with theory. In Afghanistan, soldiers sold weapons to their enemies, and living conditions were so bad that nearly half a million Russian officers and men contracted serious illnesses, ranging from dysentery to cholera.

The great army that withdrew from Eastern Europe withered on the way home. Even before the Soviet dissolution, the families of many officers lived in tents or makeshift shelters. Suicide rates soared. Later, after the events described in this book, the once-mighty Russian military drove to its slaughter in the streets of Grozny with swollen egos and empty medical kits. Generals blithely moved symbols on a map, with no sense of the butchered, charred meat to which their soldiers had been reduced. The only significant achievement of the Russian military in Chechnya was the massacre of tens of thousands of unarmed, often aged, Russian citizens (an event that our State Department, enchanted by dreams of Muscovy redeemed, ignored). And the generals and colonels in Moscow continued to churn out theories.

Those theories were impressive in their prime. As a young officer, I dutifully plodded through Soviet military texts in which five pages of brilliant ideas would be buried in 500 pages of writing so turgid it would be rejected by a university press. Underneath the cant, the Soviets were convincing in print. Gare'yev, Larionov, Lobov—they sounded smart enough to beat us. My own analytical maturation came when I finally grasped the difference between our military systems: The Soviets could articulate stunning battlefield theories, but their brittle forces could not begin to execute them; we Americans were inarticulate, but we had the wherewithal to conduct complex modern warfare. The two systems converged curiously in Operation

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Desert Storm, where our war-winning construct, "Air-land Battle," was based upon the writings of Red Army theorists from the 1920s and '30s.

All of Russia is like that—has been and will be—which is why it so confuses young journalists and old believers: The Russians talk a good fight. When you listen to them, in their council chambers or kitchens, it's dazzling at first. They seem like brilliant, superior creatures, spinning visions and quoting poetry. Then you get up and go to work in the morning while they're still snoring off their drunk or vomiting self-pity. The core of the Soviet Union was a people of fabulous imagination and practical fecklessness.

That Russian fecklessness comes through in the climactic portion of Odom's narrative. His portrayal of the comic-opera coup of August 1991 that brought the fleshless Soviet skeleton crashing down into a pile of bones is nothing short of splendid. Odom has used his long experience and superb connections in today's Russia to tell the coup (or non-coup) story from the General Staff's perspective. It is a story of small men waiting to see which way the wind would blow, of profound distrust, fear, and bureaucratic maneuvering, redolent of the human dankness of Dostoevsky and the absurdity of Gogol. The tens of thousands of tanks, the paratroop divisions, the vast Air Force—it all came down to mediocre men in uniform probing timidly for personal advantage. Yeltsin came out on top because he was the only figure willing to risk anything.

In the early '90s I spent the depths of a cold winter in Moscow, working out of the U.S. embassy on one of those bizarre projects that skittered through the Soviet wake. Thanks to a Russian friend, I was able, frequently, to go backstage at the Bolshoi Theater. The distance between the then-still-sumptuous spectacle for the audience and the filthy, creaking apparatus, the acne-faced, makeup-caked ballerinas, and the grubby pettiness in the labyrinth behind the backdrops seemed immeasurable. For me, that will always be the perfect metaphor for the Soveit Union—a great display for the world, built upon shabbiness, misery, and lies.

In his fine book, Odom has turned Soviet methodology on its head. Where the Moscow bureaucrats sought to turn art into statistics, Odom has taken the Kremlin's dusty statistics and drab texts and produced an artful work. Describing those frantic years when painfully negotiated treaties were overtaken by reality in a matter of months (or even before they were signed), and when hard, sour men were stunned by history into inadvertent acts of virtue, the author has fashioned a history that makes sense of confusion and rings true.

For those interested in Russia's future, knowledge of the Soviet past is essential. Russia's current fiscal debacle is not a novelty—failure runs in the family, and the story of the collapse of the Soviet military is the very paradigm of Russianism. Russia has not been born anew; rather, it is the shocked and crippled victim of a monstrous experiment, and it will remain a bitter convalescent throughout our lifetimes.

A work of integrity and conviction, this book will be equally infuriating to apologists for Moscow and to conservatives desperate for a strategic threat. ●

Lost Solutions

What we've forgotten about what worked in the War on Drugs

By Timothy Noah

THE FIX
By Michael Massing
New Press, $22.50

IT'S OFTEN THE CASE THAT social problems fail to get solved not because we don't know how but because the country lacks enthusiasm for the most effective solution. The social havoc wrought by the epidemic of hard-core drug abuse in the inner city is among the more depressing examples. Since the early 1970s, two lessons from the nation's war on drugs have been clear. The first is that even the most successful law enforcement efforts to block illegal importation, distribution, and consumption of illicit drugs can reduce these activities only temporarily; alternative sources

TIMOTHY NOAH *is a contributing editor for* The Washington Monthly.

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and distribution routes always spring up to meet demand. The second lesson is that drug treatment programs, though they're expensive and suffer a high failure rate, are much more successful than more politically popular cops-and-robbers efforts at achieving long term reductions in drug use.

The history of how this lesson was learned again and again, and the street-level consequences of ignoring it, are the subject of Michael Massing's fine new book. Massing, who for many years has been one of the country's very best magazine writers on domestic and international affairs, follows a blueprint quite similar to that of Nicholas Lemann's *The Promised Land.* Like Lemann's book, Massing's shifts its narrative back and forth between ground level reality (in *The Fix*, it's the story of a struggling nonprofit drug treatment center in Spanish Harlem) and the bureaucratic machinations of Washington policy makers. And as Lemann did, Massing blends narrative with analysis, relating every development in his story to the larger question of how to solve the problem. Longtime readers of *The Washington Monthly* will recognize this journalistic approach as the one most favored by this magazine, and Massing's application of it makes for an absorbing and important book.

Massing is careful not to associate himself with those who favor outright legalization of hard drugs, even though he shares much of that movement's skepticism about criminal prosecution of drug offenders. The just-make-them-legal line has always struck me as a glib analysis based on the false premise that legalizing shady activity will chase shady characters away from it. (Last time I checked, the mob still controlled much of this country's legal gambling in Las Vegas and elsewhere.) As Massing shows, it also overlooks a key lesson of prohibition: Though the outlawing of alcohol was disproportionate and futile, its repeal did lead to an increase in per capita alcohol consumption from 0.97 gallons to 2.07 gallons between 1934 and 1944. That's tolerable for a substance whose use is often harmless—the same might be said of marijuana, whose use Massing sensibly favors decriminalizing, or at least not worrying much about. (I haven't smoked the stuff in adult life, and certainly don't consider it as harmless as social drink, but I agree with Massing that whatever social harm it has brought hasn't been in the same league as that created by harder drugs.) But legalization wouldn't be tolerable for drugs whose power to addict and intoxicate cause as much harm as heroin and crack. Indeed, Massing notes, even the seemingly harmless Valium, widely prescribed in the early 1970s, was by the late 1970s "sending more people to hospital emergency rooms than any other drug, heroin and cocaine included." Doctors stopped writing the prescriptions, and the problem receded. If harder drugs were made legal, such hospital admissions would almost certainly go through the roof.

The ground-level narrative in Massing's book tells the story of Raphael Flores, proprietor of Hot Line Cares, a perpetually broke drug treatment office Flores founded in 1970. Hot Line Cares, which is essentially just a cramped office "on the second floor of an otherwise abandoned tenement," doesn't actually provide drug treatment. Rather, Flores and his ragtag staff run a sort of travel agency for addicts, guiding them through the labyrinthine world of detox centers and long-term care facilities. This might at first sound like a superfluous task, but in fact it's essential, because beds at these facilities are so scarce. (There are only about 500 detox beds for drug addicts in all of New York City, for example.) It requires an unusual amount of cunning to get an addict into the system before his or her urge for another fix overpowers the desire to get clean. As Massing points out, New York City has an appallingly balkanized drug treatment system with no central intake office. "If a Holiday Inn is full, it will at least call the Ramada down the street to see if it has a vacancy," Massing writes. "Not so two treatment programs." For drug treatment to have any hope of working, the one or two weeks of detox must be followed by long-term drug treatment—preferably a year or more. But, according to one study Massing cites, only one in 14 detox clients were referred to these programs. The reason, Massing argues, is financial disincentive. New York hospitals are reimbursed by Medicaid up to $1,000 per day for detox: "If patients relapse, their eventual return is almost guaranteed." Actually curing addicts, in other words, would be bad for business. Battling against these appalling imperatives, Flores rustles addicts off the streets, buys them bus tickets to upstate treatment centers, and keeps them moving through the system.

No doubt Flores will be hailed by some conservative who reads Massing's book as an example of why private charity is superior to government programs. But while Flores is shown to be heroically dedicated, Massing makes clear that his shoestring efforts are a poor substitute for large-scale government action. Indeed, by the end of the book, Hot Line Cares has gone bust, fallen victim to scarce philanthropic funds and Flores' own Dostoevskian personal demons, which include a busted marriage and a tendency toward addiction himself. (At one particularly low point, Massing suggests, Flores succumbs

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to a crack habit.) The job is simply too big for Flores, or even a thousand Floreses. It requires taxpayer-funded intervention.

That's where Massing's second narrative thread, about 30 years of federal drug policy making, comes in. If Flores is the hero of the ground level story, Dr. Jerome Jaffe is the hero of the Washington story. Through experimentation in the late 1960s with such new, highly effective drug treatment therapies such as methadone, an Illinois program devised by Jaffe increased patients' employment rate by 70 percent over the course of their treatment, while reducing their arrest rate by 40 percent. The results caught the eye of the Nixon White House, which brought Jaffe, a Democrat, to Washington to make drug policy; Nixon wanted drug use down, and he didn't much care that the person doing it was a liberal. Massing, who is clearly pitching his book to the liberal intelligentsia, makes a bit too much of this irony. In fact, as has often been noted, Nixon's pragmatism, along with the prevailing liberalism of the time, made many of his social welfare proposals—for example, his support for a guaranteed income—much more liberal than anything Democrats are putting forward today. Nonetheless, it is surprising to learn that Jaffe's most crucial White House ally was Egil "Bud" Krogh Jr., better remembered by history as the Watergate felon who headed up the plumbers unit. Massing portrays Krogh as something approaching a tragic hero; apparently, when he wasn't arranging the burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office, Krogh was a phenomenally idealistic and effective government official.

Massing tells a wonderful story about Jaffe's first big White House challenge: to reduce skyrocketing heroin use by the U.S. military, which according to one estimate encompassed 10 to 15 percent of all GIs in Vietnam. The Pentagon's solution—throwing offenders in the brig—was clogging the military justice system but doing little to end the problem. Jaffe came up with a better solution that relied for its effectiveness on the GIs' overpowering desire to return to the United States: subject all GIs to urinalysis before shipping them home. Anybody who flunked would have to stay in Vietnam for detox. When Jaffe presented his plan to the Pentagon, the generals insisted that this would play havoc with the complex logistics of troop movement. Jaffe, who as a newcomer to Washington was blissfully ignorant of the need to defer to "realism" and bureaucratic authority, replied, "I cannot believe that the mightiest army on earth can't get its troops to piss in a bottle." The plan was implemented, and the percentage of GIs using heroin quickly dropped by more than half.

At home, Jaffe persuaded Nixon to secure $420 million in funding for drug treatment and prevention, "more than eight times the amount when Nixon took office," and twice as much as the Nixon administration was spending on "law and order" interdiction. The program appears to have been an enormous success: By early 1973, narcotics-related deaths had declined 48 percent in New York City, Cook County, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco County, and 94 of the nation's largest cities had experienced a drop in crime. Some of this decrease may have been attributable to the disruption of the fabled "French [heroin] connection" by various foreign governments in the summer of 1972; Massing downplays this cops-and-robbers development, presumably because it is slightly inconvenient to his argument. But the striking fact remains that this was a period when the number of addicts receiving federally funded treatment jumped 300 percent within a single year.

Unfortunately, 1972 proved to be the high-water mark of the liberal, "demand side" approach to reducing hard-core drug use. The end was brought about (of course) by a liberal struggling to toughen his image: Nelson Rockefeller, then governor of New York, but hoping to win the Republican presidential nomination in 1976. Early in 1973, Rockefeller unveiled a new get-tough initiative on drugs that gave mandatory life sentences to anybody convicted of selling any quantity of heroin, methadone, LSD, amphetamines, and hashish. Jaffe, naturally, opposed the state plan, telling Rockefeller it would give a harsher sentence to someone who sold drugs than it would to someone who killed a policeman. But the law-and-order Nixon White House could hardly stand in the way of a growing law-and-order movement, especially while Bud Krogh, whose illegal activities were fingered by John Dean in April 1973, was being engulfed in Watergate. Jaffe resigned two months later.

Through the Ford and Carter administrations, funding for the law enforcement anti-drug efforts continued to grow while funding for drug treatment stayed flat; by 1976, the federal government was spending about the same amount on each, and within a few years it was spending much more on law enforcement. Meanwhile, a grassroots anti-marijuana movement, led by anxious middle-class parents of wayward teenagers, took hold. (It didn't help matters for liberals that Jimmy Carter's drug advisor, Dr. Peter Bourne, was spotted at a Washington party where cocaine and marijuana were ingested; he later resigned after a minor scandal involving his writing a Quaalude pre-

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scription to a White House aide.) In the 1980s, when Nancy Reagan sought to ditch her Marie Antionette image by plunging into public policy, the issue she chose was drug abuse, and her "Just Say No" campaign quickly became the captive of anti-marijuana forces. Although this campaign eventually did help bring casual teenage marijuana consumption down, it shifted limited financial resources away from the hard-core users, whose consumption continued to increase. When asked about this, Mrs. Reagan said, "I never have thought that money is the answer." In fact, the whole idea that drug addicts could be "cured" was regarded by the Just Say No crowd as vaguely subversive, because it undermined its no-turning-back warnings to teenagers thinking of experimenting with drugs.

The closest thing to a leering villain in Massing's book is William Bennett, drug czar to George Bush. According to Massing, Bennett's interest in the job was entirely careerist. When a drug survey showed casual drug use was declining while hard-core use was soaring, Bennett took it "like a punch in the stomach," according to an aide quoted by Massing. David Tell, another aide (now a writer for the conservative *Weekly Standard*) told Massing: "He panicked. He wanted to be J. Edgar Hoover and save the country. Now he felt there was no problem anymore." After nineteen months on the job, Bennett quit in 1990 and promptly made a financial killing with *The Book of Virtues*, his anthology of moral parables, and its many spin-offs.

The election of Bill Clinton might have been expected to revive federal funding for drug treatment, not only because Clinton was a Democrat, but because his brother, Roger, was a drug-treatment success story. Early in 1993, however, a University of Michigan study showed a 22 percent increase in the number of high school seniors who had smoked marijuana during the previous year—the first increase of any kind in fourteen years. As Massing points out, this still put high school marijuana use at less than half what it had been during the hedonistic late 1970s. But Republicans were quick to make hay out of this increase during the administration of a confessed onetime dope-smoker (albeit one who didn't inhale), and any chance of shifting federal anti-drug money to drug treatment evaporated. By 1996, drug treatment accounted for only one-third of the federal drug budget.

Around this time, of course, conservative get-tough policies on crime seemed to be getting the same sort of historic payoff that liberal drug treatments had had back in 1972. One wishes Massing had given this development a bit more careful examination at the national level. Instead, Massing confines his discussion to what happened in New York City under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Massing concedes the efficacy of Giuliani's zero-tolerance strategy, which dictated that prosecuting all manner of minor offenses would help kill off the "climate of disorder" that bred more serious crime. (The inspiration was a widely-read article in *The Atlantic Monthly* by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling.) But Massing argues that the drug trade mostly moved off the streets and indoors (though that in itself was obviously a great help in maintaining social order). In 1995, even as drug dealers were being swept off the streets by the New York Police Department, the city's hospitals were registering the same number of cocaine-related and heroin-related visits as the year before, and drug mortality figures "were actually moving upward." Busting fare-beaters might be successful in keeping pickpockets off the subways, Massing concludes, but "given the power of addiction, the normal rules of deterrence simply did not apply." Still, it's unfortunate for Massing that his book deadline came along just as growing evidence was emerging that the cocaine epidemic really was ending. Although there's a decent case to be made that it receded largely for reasons having nothing to do with police action, Massing devotes frustratingly little attention to this controversy.

Massing's larger point, though, remains unassailable: If the nation were more serious about ending the kind of drug abuse that ruins lives and neighborhoods, it would spend considerably more money on proven methods of drug treatment. Today, Massing writes, the United States has 10 times as many hard-core drug users as it had when Richard Nixon became president in 1969. Yet the nation's drug-treatment system can accommodate only half of all serious addicts. Massing proposes, sensibly, that the current $17 billion federal drug budget be rejiggered so that half the money goes to law enforcement and half (as opposed to the current one-third) goes to treatment. As I write this, the zeitgeist seems headed in precisely the opposite direction. Giuliani recently announced a plan to end methadone treatment for heroin addicts in New York's city-run hospitals, making it the first major city to pull the plug on a form of drug treatment that's compiled a 30-year track record of success. "They think the jails are full now?" the Associated Press quoted one former heroin addict as saying. "Do you know what it would be like without methadone?" Massing's exemplary, cool-headed book will hopefully restore some sense to this debate.

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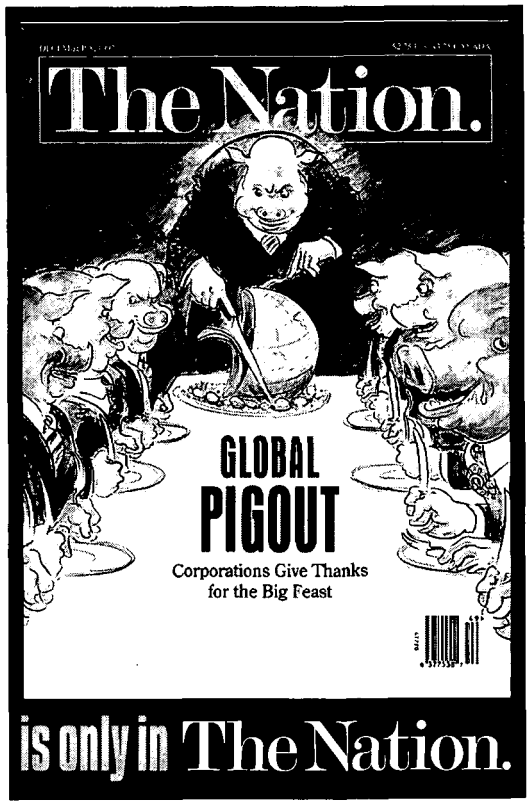
WHAT THE MEDIA ISN'T TELLING YOU

About The Smithsonian Institution and its ongoing transformation into an Epcot on the Potomac. The latest sellout, reported by *The Nation*: to the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, fighting to gain oil-drilling rights to fragile Alaskan wilderness areas — and funders (to the tune of $300,000) of the Smithsonian's current "Oil From the Arctic" exhibition, a feel-good paean to Alyeska's building of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline.

About The Wall Street Journal Contrary to its self-assessment as "the world's most important publication," Gore Vidal noted in his dissection of "The New Theocrats" for *The Nation* "just how unknown this cheery neo-fascist paper is to the majority of Americans."

About The Greenhouse Effect *The Nation*'s David Helvarg uncovered the origin of the "scientific evidence" downplaying the devastating potential in global warming: a wide-ranging stealth campaign led by US energy corporations and oil-and-coal-state politicians, using the research of massively funded conservative think tanks, publications and public relations outfits. (It's called "the Tobacco Institute strategy.")



About National Education Testing as defined by Jonathan Kozol in *The Nation*: "Children in poor rural schools will continue to get education funded at less than $4,000 yearly ...while children in the richest suburbs will continue to receive up to $18,000 yearly. But they'll all be told they must be held to the same standards and judged by their performance on the same exams."

About Sprint, whose $12 million slap on the wrist by the National Labor Relations Board for its blatant union-busting tactics went virtually unreported by everyone — except *The Nation*.

About The F.B.I. An intensive investigation for *The Nation* turned up everything from slovenly casework to massively skewed priorities. Example: Number of convictions for health and safety violations against employees in a single year: one. Number of telephone taps: 1.3 million.

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Tidbits & Outrages

Give us your tired, your poor— but not your digitally impaired

For more than a year, the INS has refused to grant citizenship to a British immigrant because the young man was born with only five fingers. The U.S. immigration policy requires applicants for citizenship to have all 10 fingers fingerprinted.

Wait til Giuliani hears this!

To cut down on the cockroach population, officials in Manila will pay people 1.5 pesos for every 10 roaches turned in.

And her opponents are still running attack ads

An Oklahoma housewife recently won 21 percent of the vote in the Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate, despite the fact that she had been dead for six weeks

What the First Lady should get Bill for Xmas

An Ivory Coast army colonel died from a gunshot wound while testing a "magic" belt that the belt's maker claimed protects wearers from bullets as long as the person abstains from sex.

They say it helps with barn-raising

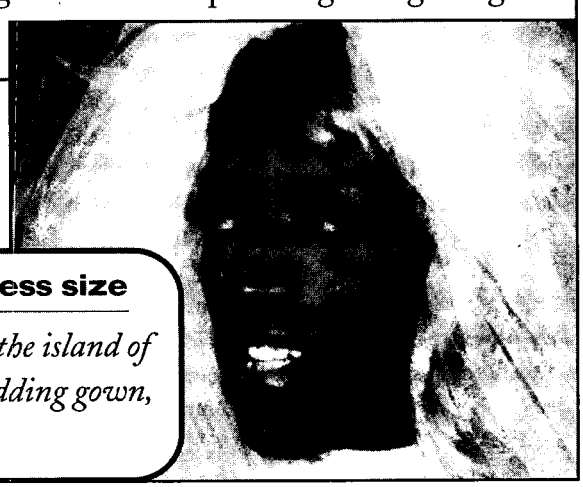
Two Amish men were charged with buying cocaine from a motorcycle gang and distributing it to other members of their religious sect.

The roots of the Asian Meltdown

A Japanese woman was arrested for allegedly selling her daughter to a Geisha house in order to get money to go play pachinko.

Will they still let him raise funds for Gore?

A Buddhist monk in Cambodia was expelled for sneaking out of his temple at night to go sing karaoke.



Good thing they wear the same dress size

The night before her wedding, a bride-to-be on the island of Crete walked in on her groom, dressed in her wedding gown, and in the arms of his best man.

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Political Booknotes

Internal Dissent

By Thomas E. Ricks

RICHARD HOLBROOKE'S *To End a War* should be read by anyone who still believes that the relationship between the U.S. military and its political overseers is healthy.

Throughout his memoir of the U.S. role in ending the war in Bosnia, Holbrooke, recently nominated to become the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and a leading contender to be secretary of state in any future Democratic administration, portrays himself as having two adversaries in the Balkans: the Serbs and the U.S. military. As late as September 1995, when U.S. warplanes were bombing the Bosnian Serbs to force them to begin serious peace negotiations, Leighton Smith, the commander of all U.S. Navy forces in Europe, insisted that he did not have a "dog in this fight," Holbrooke contends.

TO END A WAR
by Richard Holbrooke
Random House, $25

At a crucial meeting at the White House just over a week later, William Owens, then vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told President Clinton, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Secretary of Defense William Perry, and others that the Bosnian bombing campaign needed to end soon because the U.S. bombers were running out of worthwhile targets, according to this account. Holbrooke indicates twice that neither he nor Secretary Christopher believed that Owens was telling the truth. They believed that he and other senior U.S. military officials simply didn't support the bombing campaign and wanted it to end, so were purposely being misleading about the number of remaining targets. Having covered that bombing campaign and subsequently interviewed some of the people who participated in its planning and execution, I think that while many in the U.S. military did in fact oppose the bombing campaign, Owens was telling the truth. It appears likely that Holbrooke and Christopher didn't understand how effective precision bombing can be, especially against poorly defended targets that had been studied for years.

But the point is that the State Department's representatives came away from a meeting at the White House believing, correctly or not, that they were being lied to by the top representatives of the Pentagon. "I still wonder what might have been accomplished had we been able to continue the bombing for another two weeks," Holbrooke writes with evident bitterness, laying the blame for the shakiness of postwar Bosnia squarely at the feet of the U.S. military. One wonders how much more bitter this memoir might have been had the U.S. air attacks failed to impose peace on Bosnia.

Holbrooke continues his offensive against the U.S. military in the heart of the book, his account of the negotiations at Dayton, Ohio, in the fall of 1995 at which a peace agreement was finally devised. Again and again, he portrays the U.S. military as "minimalists" who rejected proposals that would have led to a more vigorous peace process—giving the NATO peacekeeping force a strong hand in capturing war criminals, arming the Bosnians so they could deter future attacks, and rebuilding Bosnia's political and industrial infrastructure.

As Holbrooke tells it, this civil-military distrust led in November 1995 to arm twisting by Vice President Gore. At yet another contentious White House meeting, Gore complained about administration policy being undercut in Congress by Pentagon officials. "Our military representatives on the Hill usually leave their audience more uncomfortable than when they arrived," Gore lectured, according to Holbrooke's account. This meeting appears to have led directly to the subsequent misleading testimony by Defense Secretary Perry that the U.S. military would be able to get in and out of Bosnia within one year, a vow that no one in the U.S. military appeared to believe—and that has been proven dramatically wrong, as U.S. forces remain in Bosnia three years later.

Intrigued by Holbrooke's account of this pervasive distrust, I called Smith, who is now retired. He insisted that Holbrooke's book is riddled with inaccuracies. The allegation that he claimed he didn't have a dog in the Balkans fight, he said, is "absolute bullshit." In fact, he adds, during the bombing campaign, "Dick Holbrooke called me at a couple of points and asked me to slow down the bombing, and I said, 'That's what we did in Vietnam and I'm not going to do it.'"

Smith's reading of Holbrooke: "He's a pitifully small person who tries to make himself look good at the expense of others. ... He never really fully understood what was going on on the ground." Remember, these are the senior U.S. military officer and the senior U.S. diplomat charged with bringing peace to the Balkans. It's a hell of a way to run a railroad.

It is instructive to compare Holbrooke's memoir of negotiating an end to the Bosnia conflict with Winston Churchill's memoir of the far more difficult job of running World War II. Churchill wasn't afraid to treat his generals harshly. He pushed them hard, relieving those he found overcautious or ineffectual. On Jan. 22, 1942, in a typical cable, Churchill angrily told the First Sea Lord that the Royal Navy's slipshod defense of the west coast of Malaya amounted to "one of the most astonishing British lapses recorded in naval history."

But nowhere in his six long volumes of history does Churchill contend that his generals misled him, or failed to give their best effort, or did-

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n't tell him the truth as best they could. By contrast, distrust between U.S. political and military leaders pervades Holbrooke's book. The only group of generals in Churchill's work who resemble the U.S. military as depicted by Holbrooke are the French officers who led France to defeat in 1940.

To be fair, Churchill provided his generals far steadier leadership than the Clinton administration has given the U.S. military. Churchill spoke the language of soldiers, and was also a gifted strategic thinker. As he told the House of Commons in July 1942, near the very low point of the Allied effort, "you will not get generals to run risks unless they feel they have behind them a strong government." The fastest way to repair the relationship between the U.S. military and its civilian overseers would be to give the military strong, sure leadership. When that happens, we will no longer have (to borrow a phrase from commentator Ralph Peters) so many generals who talk Sherman but act McClellan.

THOMAS E. RICKS *is the author of* Making the Corps, The Washington Monthly's *1997 "Political Book of the Year."*

Us vs. Them

by Esther Schrader

FOR *Washington Post* REPORTER Roberto Suro, making life in the United States better for Latino immigrants like his parents, who came to the country from Puerto Rico and Ecuador, means making it harder for the would-be immigrants of today to follow them in.

That is the harsh and controversial conclusion of Suro's *Strangers Among Us*, which seeks to answer the questions raised by the stream of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean who are reconfiguring American politics and culture. The main answer from this son of immigrants is classic Us vs. Them. Even as Suro writes with deep empathy for Latinos already locked in the barrios of this country—the people who clean our houses, mow our lawns, and sort our garbage—when it comes to the question of the folks who are forced to steal across our borders and crawl through our deserts just to find work, he shows no mercy.

Sounding more like California Gov. Pete Wilson than the son of immigrants, Suro favors imposing strict controls at the borders, penalties to bar arrested undocumented crossers from future entry to the United States, and making economic aid to countries such as Mexico dependent on cooperation in stopping illegal immigration. He suggests Latinos legally living in the United States take the lead in attacking illegal immigration, advocating they point their fingers at illegals living in their communities. "Latinos who have decided to make a permanent home in the United States—legal immigrants, new citizens, and the native born—must accept the fact that a large-scale illegal influx is harmful to their long-term interests," Suro writes.

As an answer to the puzzling problems that beset Latinos in the United States today, Suro's analysis is strictly myopic. He fails to consider that most illegal immigrants are relatives and friends of those here legally, and that many of those who are legal residents today were not when they arrived. He fails to consider the effect of closing our borders on countries such as Mexico, where both emigration and the drug trade serve to keep internal chaos at bay. And he gives short shrift to the great truth of all immigrations in history—that people are propelled to leave their homes in large numbers only when driven by economic necessity or repression. Without addressing its root causes, trying to address the effects of that flight are doomed to failure.

All of which serves to obscure what is in many respects a terrifically useful book by a reporter with the heart to do a great deal more leg work than most United States newspapers have done in the growing barrios in the cities they cover. Suro's book achieves its greatest depth in its exploration of the barrios of the United States, where millions of immigrants and sons and daughters of immigrants from throughout Latin America and

New York Times bestselling author
Stephen E. Ambrose
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"'If I was ever in a desperate situation,' [Ambrose] declares, 'I would want Meriwether Lewis for my leader.' When it comes to assaying American history, one could say the same for Stephen Ambrose." —*Newsweek*

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the Caribbean live, die, and suffer in the shadows of the larger culture around them. Through the author's eyes, we read in searing detail of Latinos throwing Molotov cocktails during the 1992 Los Angeles riots, and of a U.S.-born teenage mother-to-be in Houston who rejects both the Mexico of her parents and the responsibility of her unborn child. We read about Dominican taxi drivers in New York more preoccupied with the politics of their homeland than with making a way for themselves in their new home, about the luxe life of Cuban Miami, the sad history of the Puerto Ricans in New York, and the barrio life of Guatemalans in Houston.

STRANGERS AMONG US: How Latino Immigration Is Transforming America
by Roberto Suro
Knopf, $26.95

Wherever Suro lands, he never lets up on his urgent and mostly pessimistic thesis: Instead of learning how to succeed in the United States, as immigrant groups before them have done, Latinos are learning how to be poor; that even as Latinos tend our children, sweat and smile for us, serve us fast food, and pick our fruit, they are at risk of forever dwelling in an internal borderland.

At the heart of his analysis is the belief that Latino immigration today is different than any immigration before it, and that the failure of Latinos in the United States to climb out of the ghetto at the rate earlier immigrants did is the result of forces beyond their control. Latino immigration is a different animal than earlier immigrant flows, Suro writes. It is vast, already larger than any single ethnic influx before it. It is largely illegal. And because Latinos come from countries that are close by, because new communications technology allows them to travel back and forth between their new land and their homeland, Latinos often straddle two worlds in a way earlier immigrants, whose homelands were lost in the mists of memory and nostalgia, did not. The effort often keeps Latino immigrants from mustering the energy to succeed here. And it leaves their children born here at a loss, vulnerable and uninvested in the American way of life.

Suro writes that factors that helped European immigrants move up in earlier generations elude Latinos today. Whereas Irish and Italians were able to climb a generational stepladder from canal diggers to factory workers to white-collar professionals, Suro argues the ladder is now missing its middle rungs. In information-age America, there is less room for immigrants to move up, Suro writes. Latino immigrants, who often come to the United States poorly educated, have a particularly hard time getting a foothold on the ladder in the new economy, Suro believes. Social scientists who say Latinos are locked in poverty because they are unprepared for life in the United States are wrong, he writes, insisting that it is the economy, society, and lack of good public education and social services that are failing Latinos today. Societal structures that helped earlier immigrants—unions, churches, schools—are in disrepair, he writes. Instead of the "level playing field" that confronted immigrants a generation ago, he writes, Latinos today are victims of a deteriorating life in the United States that exerts a powerful influence on their fate. The past, Suro writes, does not serve as a model for the future.

As empathy, Suro's conclusions are moving. As social analysis, they verge on the simplistic. Suro overlooks the success stories, the high achievers produced by those same schools, the difference between students whose parents stress homework and attendance and those who do not. By focusing exclusively on Latinos, he begs the question of why Asian immigrants, Pakistani and Indian immigrants, immigrants from the Middle East are not encountering the same obstacles he believes Latinos are.

In fact, the world of Latinos in the United States is far larger than what Suro explores. The success stories are more numerous than he admits. Suro writes that barrio children stand no chance because their parents work blisteringly hard and enjoy few luxuries. But doesn't that sound suspiciously like the story of every immigrant family everywhere?

As for Suro's thesis that there is no place for low-skilled immigrants in the information age, a study released in May by Wayne Cornelius, a political scientist at the University of California at San Diego, ironically one of the immigration experts Suro says he most relied on, concludes that computer-product manufacturers and other high technology businesses will continue to need new arrivals with little education and skill. In fact, Cornelius found that unskilled immigrant labor is increasingly "structurally embedded" into the economy, especially in California, where immigrants have largely replaced U.S.-born workers in many occupations, from electronics worker to gardener.

It is in his prescriptions for a new U.S. immigration policy that Suro appears most out of his league. He is rightly critical of the history of U.S.

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immigration policy, which has veered from luring Latinos here to pushing them out. But in focusing on the problematic history on the United States side of the border, Suro ignores the realities on the other side. If the United States follows the policy Suro suggests—and increasingly, doing otherwise is politically unpalatable—the United States could face what it has always feared: a real revolution in Mexico and true chaos on the border. To deprive Mexico of its largest sources of income would hasten the collapse of its already weak central authority. The illegal immigrants who manage the long journey to the United States may in fact be just the outlet countries on both sides of the border need—providing a much needed workforce in the United States while protecting against a potentially much larger flood of immigrants from a contiguous, troubled, and ever more populous Third World country.

ESTHER SCHRADER, *a reporter with the* Los Angeles Times, *was Mexico City correspondent for* The San Jose Mercury News *from 1993-1997.*

L.A. Exposed

By Jim Newton

IT'S AWFULLY HARD NOT TO love a book whose best chapter is entitled "The Case for Letting Malibu Burn."

And yet, Mike Davis, Southern California's defiant, brilliant curmudgeon, has delivered in *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* a collection that is everything but lovable. It's sharp, savage, laugh-out-loud witty, thoughtful, exquisitely researched, occasionally hyperbolic, and indispensable. It delivers thunderbolts to Los Angeles' complacent, cocky, conservative core, for which he is to be appreciated and admired.

But it's still a hard book to love. This is a collection of essays, and, like most such compendia, its quality careens from one chapter to the next. Davis, who may well be our best synthesist, reaches across disciplines to deliver a powerful main thesis: Los Angeles has, stupidly and defiantly, placed itself in the crosshairs of disasters—natural and manmade; its political institutions have cavalierly dared the poor to protest their treatment, and its builders, developers and growth junkies have built a city that sits squarely across fault lines, killer bee invasion routes, mountain lion ranges, and tornado corridors, to name a few.

ECOLOGY OF FEAR:
Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster
by Mike Davis
Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt $27.50

The results of this history are painfully obvious to virtually everyone. In 1992, the year I moved into a cozy Hollywood bungalow, Los Angeles residents protested the not guilty verdicts in the first Rodney G. King beating trial by burning their own neighborhoods—along with a goodly portion of mine—to the ground. In 1993, wildfires swept through Malibu and Calabasas. And in 1994 an earthquake centered in Northridge ripped through Los Angeles and my beleagured Hollywood home, eventually earning itself a place in history as the most costly natural disaster of all time. For a while there, the city's grim joke was that we were just waiting on locusts to round out our brush with biblical reckoning.

Suffice it to say that Davis has plenty to work with when he sets out to prove that this is no place for humankind to make itself at home. And prove it he does. His early chapters are good enough to justify his recent "genius grant" and live up to the dazzling example of his earlier book, *City of Quartz*. They are about earthquakes, wildfires, and the rapacious land grab that transformed a Mediterranean valley in Southern California into the second-largest city in America—a land-grab largely promoted by the owners of my newspaper (which Davis wisely and repeatedly points out) and which wrought some serious ecological and social damage.

Start with earthquakes. Davis' thesis: You ain't seen nothing yet. His evidence: Earthquakes over the past several thousand years appear to have been far more severe than those in the past several hundred; and the San Andreas fault, Californians' favorite nemesis, may not be the worst threat out there: Thrust faults under the Los Angeles area may bring the city to its knees without so much as a hiccup from the big mama of California's cracks. Moreover, earthquakes, like much of the ecology of Southern California, are poorly measured by statistical averages, as Davis shrewdly points

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out. They tend to the extreme.

"In Southern California, the classical uniformitarian assumption that the present is the key to the past, and therefore to the future, is likely to prove a dangerous fallacy," Davis writes cheerily. "Recent research on past climate change and seismic activity has transformed the question, 'Why so many recent disasters?' into the truly unnerving question, 'Why so few?'"

And then there's the attack on open space. In 1930, a distinguished group of Los Angeles civic leaders warned that open space was being eaten up so fast that, without prompt action, "the growth of the Region will tend to strangle itself." Wise counsel, but thoroughly ignored. Ruled by an ideology that Davis describes as "selfish, profit-driven presentism," Southern California paved its orchards and built along its dangerously dry hillsides.

The result: fire. One piece at a time, Davis demonstrates that rapid expansion placed housing in the way of fire and that the political determination to protect rich people from inevitable blazes undermined the righteous need to protect poor people from preventable building fires. Nowhere are his political instincts and research strengths more in evidence than here. No honest reader can conclude anything other than that Los Angeles' power structure decided to devote its fire protection efforts to the rich while blithely turning its back on tenements that erupted just as frequently and with just as much loss of life. This is the case for letting Malibu burn. Davis makes it convincingly.

But then he stretches his evidence of threat. He doesn't just want us to be anguished by fire and earthquake and political indifference. He also demands a fear of tornadoes, mountain lions, and killer bees. Here I found my capacity for despair tested. In the battle between mountain lions and people, I'm afraid for the mountain lions but not particularly for myself. In the killer bee struggle, I have to assume we'll get by.

So here's my problem with his book. I'm persuaded, if I weren't already, that I am living in an area destined to be flattened by an earthquake. I accept that I'm at the mercy of wildfire. I understand that my neighborhood has gone up in riotous flames before and may again.

But no matter how much Mike Davis insists I should be, I'm not scared of tornadoes, mountain lions, or killer bees. And what makes his book ultimately less than it could be is that he asks readers to accept each of his dour insights with the same credence. The threat of mountain lions and killer bees is offered up with the same enthusiasm as earthquakes and wildfires. This has the effect of devaluing his best points in an effort to hype the worst. It's as though he had placed an exclamation point after every sentence; eventually, it loses its force.

In his final chapter, Davis regains his footing. With "Beyond Blade Runner" he is again in top form, dissecting the dissolution of Los Angeles' downtown, penetrating the self-congratulatory rhetoric of the LAPD, and concluding chillingly with a deep-space look at the 1992 riots. This is why one reads Mike Davis.

Ecology of Fear expands Davis' place as Los Angeles' pre-eminent, if dour, analyst. It is full of wisdom and wit, and it gores all the right oxes. Just recently, I was having lunch in a Brentwood restaurant on a sunny California afternoon with a public relations expert involved in marketing Los Angeles to the world. I mentioned to her that I was reading *Ecology of Fear*. She grimaced: "We'd like to ban that book," she said unhappily, then ordered the chopped salad.

JIM NEWTON *covers city hall for the* Los Angeles Times.

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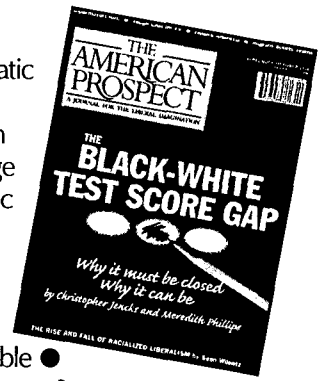

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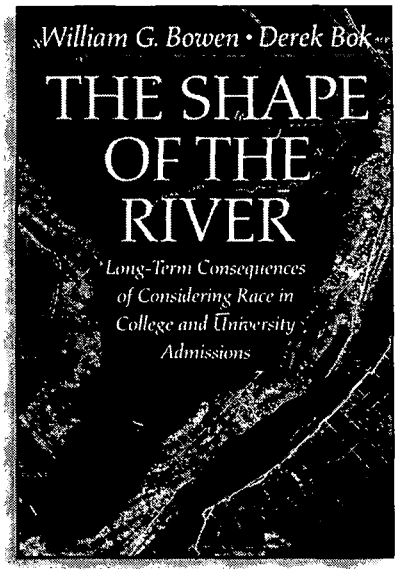

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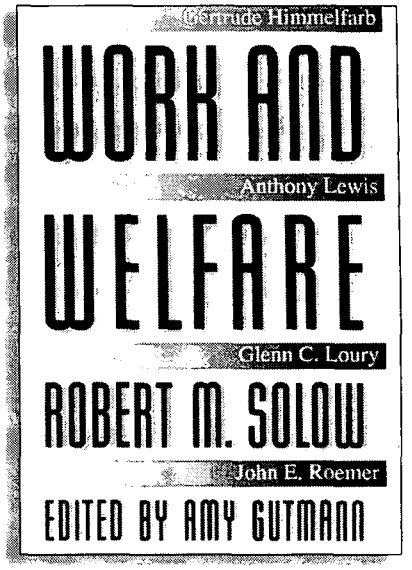

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